RAY BRADBURY

HOME to STAY!

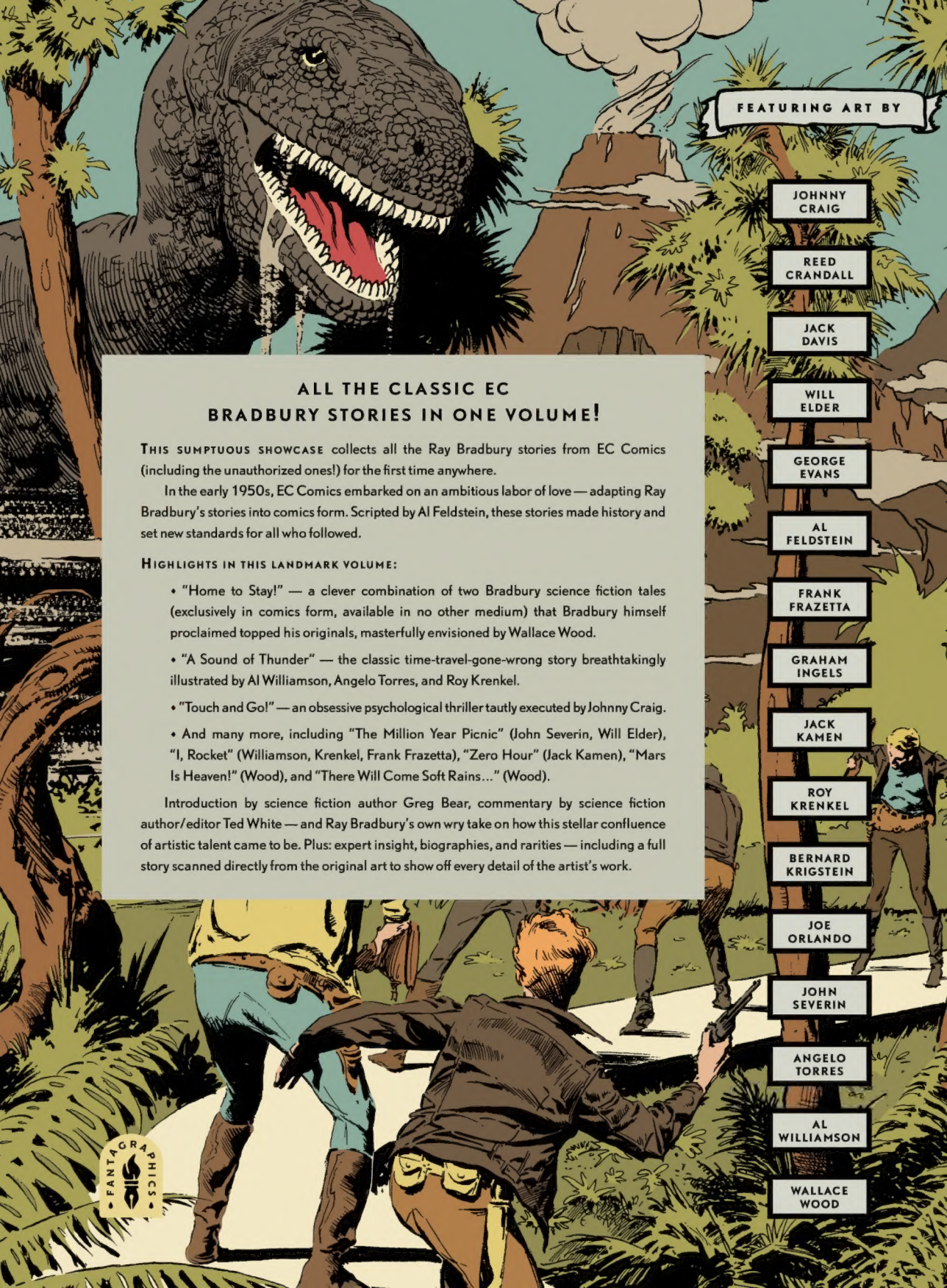
THE COMPLETE RAY BRADBURY EC STORIES

INTRODUCTION BY

GREG BEAR

COMMENTARY BY

TED WHITE



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ALL THE CLASSIC EC BRADBURY STORIES IN ONE VOLUME!

THIS SUMPTUOUS SHOWCASE collects all the Ray Bradbury stories from EC Comics (including the unauthorized ones!) for the first time anywhere.

In the early 1950s, EC Comics embarked on an ambitious labor of love — adapting Ray Bradbury's stories into comics form. Scripted by Al Feldstein, these stories made history and set new standards for all who followed.

HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS LANDMARK VOLUME:

- "Home to Stay!" — a clever combination of two Bradbury science fiction tales (exclusively in comics form, available in no other medium) that Bradbury himself proclaimed topped his originals, masterfully envisioned by Wallace Wood.
- "A Sound of Thunder" — the classic time-travel-gone-wrong story breathtakingly illustrated by Al Williamson, Angelo Torres, and Roy Krenkel.
- "Touch and Go!" — an obsessive psychological thriller tautly executed by Johnny Craig.
- And many more, including "The Million Year Picnic" (John Severin, Will Elder), "I, Rocket" (Williamson, Krenkel, Frank Frazetta), "Zero Hour" (Jack Kamen), "Mars Is Heaven!" (Wood), and "There Will Come Soft Rains..." (Wood).

Introduction by science fiction author Greg Bear, commentary by science fiction author/editor Ted White — and Ray Bradbury's own wry take on how this stellar confluence of artistic talent came to be. Plus: expert insight, biographies, and rarities — including a full story scanned directly from the original art to show off every detail of the artist's work.

FANTAGRAPHICS

HOME *to* STAY!

THE COMPLETE RAY BRADBURY EC STORIES

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"Skeleton," *Weird Tales*, September 1945

"The Lake," *Weird Tales*, May 1944

"The Smiling People," *Weird Tales*, May 1946

"The Emissary," *Dark Carnival* (1947)

"The Small Assassin," *Dime Mystery Magazine*, November 1946

"The Handler," *Weird Tales*, January 1947

"Wake for the Living" (a.k.a. "The Coffin"), *Dime Mystery Magazine*, September 1947

"Let's Play 'Poison'," *Weird Tales*, November 1946

"There Was an Old Woman," *Weird Tales*, July 1944

"The Man Upstairs," *Harper's*, March 1947

THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES

"The Earth Men," *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, August 1948

"Mars Is Heaven" (a.k.a. "The Third Expedition"), *Planet Stories*, Fall 1948

"The Silent Towns," *Charm*, March 1949

"The Long Years" (a.k.a. "Dwellers in Silence"), *Maclean's*, September 15, 1948

"There Will Come Soft Rains," *Collier's*, May 6, 1950

"The Million Year Picnic," *Planet Stories*, Summer 1946

THE ILLUSTRATED MAN

"Kaleidoscope," *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, October 1949

"The Rocket Man," *Maclean's*, March 1, 1951

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"Outcast of the Stars" (a.k.a. "The Rocket"), *Super Science Stories*, March 1950

THE GOLDEN APPLES OF THE SUN

"Touch and Go!" (a.k.a. "The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl"), *Detective Book Magazine*, Winter 1948

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"The One Who Waits," *The Arkham Sampler*, Summer 1949

"Punishment Without Crime," *Other Worlds Science Stories*, March 1950

"The Screaming Woman," *Today*, May 27, 1951

RAY BRADBURY

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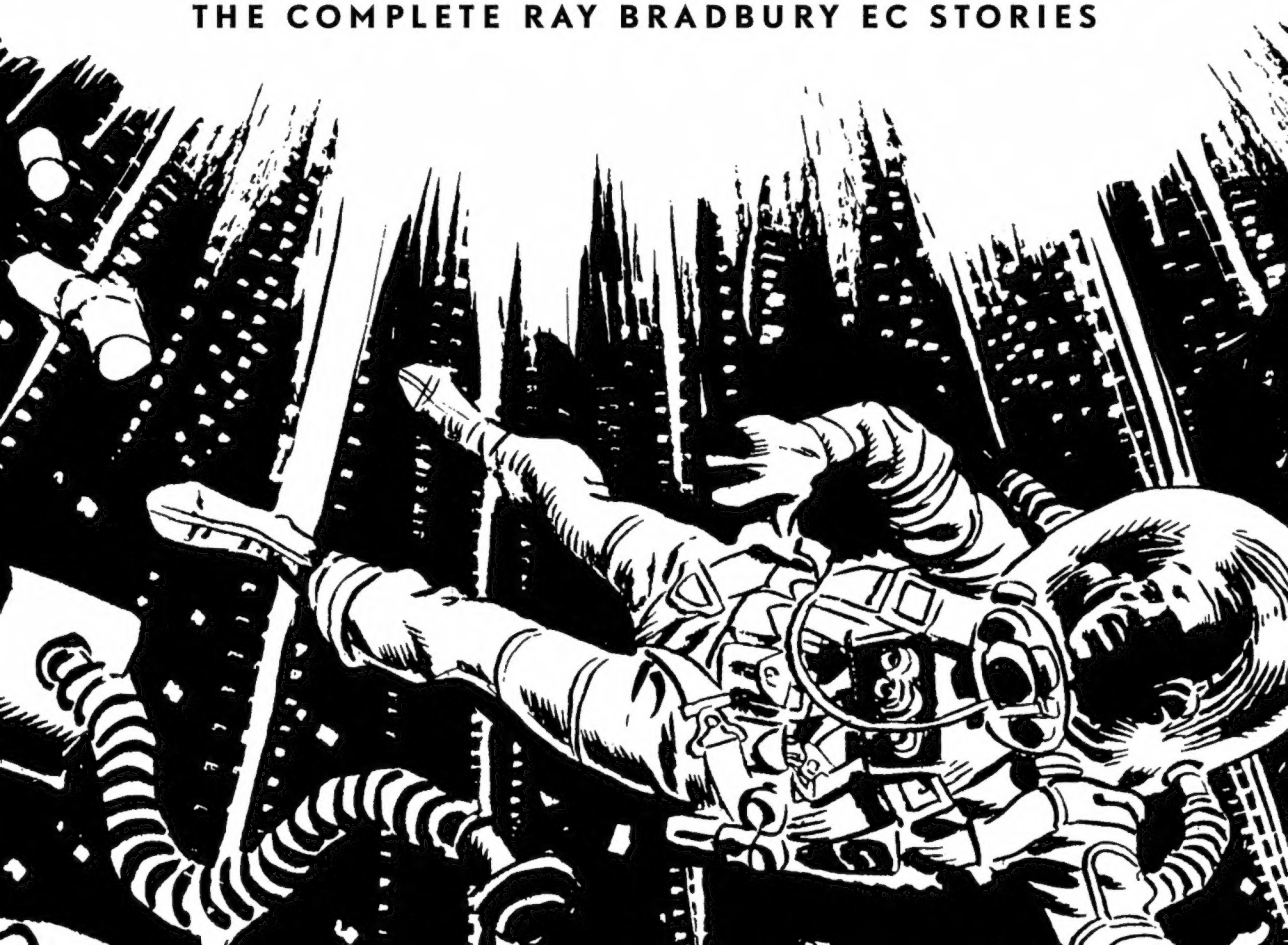

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INTRODUCTION

KNOWING RAY

by Greg Bear

My friend David Clark had heard that Ray was scheduled to give a talk at the Russ Auditorium in San Diego High School. This was opportune, because we thought we had great news to deliver to him — our Crawford High School film club had decided we were going to make a class movie out of his story, "A Sound of Thunder." I had written a short screenplay, and we wanted to deliver it to him, and this seemed a prime opportunity! David told the club he knew of another Southern California film group in Carlsbad that was currently involved in a similar effort, with the same story. But that did not give me pause.

David's mother, Jean, drove us out to the auditorium. After Ray's excellent talk, David got us up onto the stage as Ray was being escorted to the rear, to his limo, to return to Los Angeles. We gathered behind the auditorium, intercepted him in a friendly way, chatted enthusiastically for a bit, and I was able to deliver my script to Ray or his driver. There was another young man waiting for Ray, red-haired and wearing a green Army coat, carrying another version of the story in script form, and it was here that I first met Phil Tippett.

And so, two friendships were born.

Our friends at Crawford were drawn to Ray's lectures around the southland, and over the next ten or twelve years, we attended many. Ray had a way with explaining his life and enthusiasms that appealed to us, young and enthusiastic as we all were.

In fact, we attended so many of Ray's talks that at one point, when he peered out into the audience before his lecture, he spotted our group and said, "I'm not changing a word just because you've already heard it all!"

Ray was often very straightforward about his life and his career, at least where it came to his relationships with movies and TV shows. One of his tales involved a French film director who spoke with Ray about some project or another and answered all Ray's suggestions with "*Banal! Trés banal!*" until Ray finally exploded and said "No, *you're banal, trés banal!*" Ray was more circumspect about other relationships. We got partial versions of his time spent

Ray Bradbury at the 1981 San Diego [illegible] Con. Photo by Clay G[illegible]

with John Huston on the movie version of *Moby Dick*, though Ray did tell a funny story about a trick Huston pulled in their Irish offices. At one point, while Ray was presenting new pages of his script, from behind his desk, Huston waved a letter purportedly from the studio heads. The letter said, in essence, that the studio bosses felt the one thing lacking in Ray's script was love interest, and so they requested he add a woman character to the ensemble ...

As Ray read this, his face turned purple, and he began to rant around the room until, out of the corner of his eye, he saw Huston devilishly grinning, about to explode with laughter. Ray was the victim of a Huston practical joke, and there was no studio letter, in reality. What we did not hear for years after Huston's passing was how much cruelty he was capable of, not just with Ray but with such stars as Bogart. Huston was a sacred monster of film!

"He admired the art, and he was a big fan of comics, after all ..."

But the stories we were told were as much about Ray and his maturation as about those he had to deal with. We did not hear much about the Truffaut version of *Fahrenheit 451*, which Ray did not much like, strangely — though I thought it was fine. Nor did we hear more than passing reference to his lawsuit with *Playhouse 90* over a teleplay similar to *Fahrenheit 451*, "The Sound of a Different Drummer," which Ray won on appeal, but which absorbed years of creative effort, a process he never repeated.

What we did hear about was his early and continuing love affair with comic strips and comic books, and the exceptionally positive outcome on another potential dispute over stories appearing in EC Comics. Ray thought, quite correctly, that some of these stories bore an uncanny resemblance to his own. He wrote a letter to Bill Gaines, reproduced elsewhere in this volume, suggesting that somebody had made a mistake, and rather than threatening a lawsuit, he thought there could be a mutually beneficial partnership. He admired the art, and he was a big fan of comics, after all ...

Gaines quickly realized the benefits of banners on their comics featuring Bradbury's name on a regular basis.

And so was born this book!

Ray told us again and again not to abandon our loves in favor of impressing our friends or seeming more sophisticated, more "cool" or grown up. He told us he had done that once when he was a boy and had thrown out Buck Rogers newspaper strips he was saving because so-called "friends" told him they were not worthy of a maturing young man. He regretted that and scrambled to find those lost pages! Never again, he told us, would he let others ridicule what he deeply loved — and neither should we.

Without realizing it, we were absorbing and processing not just our own maturity, but laying down the bulwarks of what would soon drive the emotional truths of San Diego Comic-Con.

Our connections with Ray expanded. On one vacation visit to my grandmother's house in Burbank, four of us — John Pound, David

Clark, my grandmother, and me — were invited out to lunch with Ray at Frascati in Beverly Hills. We had a fine time. With fancy hamburgers and milkshakes and Cokes, Ray was in his element! He loved our enthusiasms, and we, in turn, were impressed that here was a famous writer who enjoyed our company. In fact, after our lunch, he accompanied us on an expedition to Cascade Studios, where many fine stop-motion animators picked up work on the Pillsbury Doughboy, Alky Alka-Seltzer, and the like. We were seated in the studio theater and shown some of Jim Danforth's latest work on *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth*, then in production with Hammer in England.

That evening, at Ray's invitation, we attended a press screening at Warner Brothers of his latest film, *The Illustrated Man*. We also met director Jack Smight!

In a few months, as we were making early plans for a convention, Shel Dorf invited Ray to come down to San Diego and join us. Ray told Shel what his lecture fee was — and Shel explained our shoestring finances! Ray then suggested that he could join us if we were non-profit and donated our earnings to a charitable organization. And in response, it was decided to make the convention a non-profit, which it has been for more than 50 years.

Ray went to every Comic-Con from the first until he was no longer up to the trip from Los Angeles. In many of his visits, he teamed up on a panel with Ray Harryhausen. The attendees who saw these events were privileged to listen to two old friends reminiscing about their lives in the thirties and forties, and thereafter, when they helped transform both publishing and motion pictures.

In 2000, Ray was hit with a major stroke. His wife Maggie put him on "the rock star diet" to help restore him, but thereafter, he was confined to a wheelchair.

With excellent help and constant care, Ray continued to get around, until, after a grueling schedule during the 2010 Comic-Con, he finally withdrew into his house. Ray Harryhausen, who had moved to the U.K. in 1960, was also now too frail to travel.

Still, through 2012, Ray Bradbury was visited by friends, and by Astrid and me, many times. Our last visit, while he was bedridden, lasted about half an hour. I spotted, among the artifacts in his room, a copy of the collected Buck Rogers comics and pointed it out to him.

"You wrote the introduction," I reminded him.

"Read it to me," he requested, and I did.

It was a perfectly staged circular moment — the comic that introduced Ray to science fiction, reminding Ray of his early days collecting and reading, in his own words.

"Bring it here," he said, and I lifted the book up for him to see it closer. He read the first strip on the first page, and said, "Wonderful! It's all still wonderful."

And it was.

That was the last time we saw Ray. We lingered in his living room before leaving and took pictures of the many paintings and artifacts kept there.

I had known Ray for 45 years. ◎

GREG BEAR is the author of more than 40 books, including *Blood Music*, *Eon*, *The Forge of God*, *Moving Mars*, *Darwin's Radio*, *City at the End of Time*, and *The Unfinished Land*. His work has been awarded five Nebulas, two Hugos, and many international awards. He's married to Astrid Anderson Bear and father to Chloe and Alex.

LOVE AND THEFT: WHEN RAY MET BILL AND AL

by Ben Saunders

What distinguishes imitation from plagiarism? How do we separate an act of homage or tribute from appropriation? Why do we regard certain works of art as derivative and others as inspired?

As these questions indicate, the concept of "artistic influence" is complex, challenging, and vexing. The many terms we have developed to describe different varieties of creative borrowing not only express a range of moral attitudes — from condemnation to approval — but also suggest the diversity of perspectives to consider when we try to figure out who owes what to whom. Sometimes we are willing to acknowledge a mystical dimension to the motions of the muse — after all, the word "inspiration" etymologically evokes the very breath of God. Sometimes, less divinely, we call in the lawyers.

But if Ray Bradbury had made that second choice back in 1952 — and he almost did — you would not be holding this remarkable book in your hands.

The clear echoes of two of his tales, "Kaleidoscope" and "The Rocket Man," in the plot of Al Feldstein and Wallace Wood's "Home to Stay!" (p. 135), could certainly have served as the basis for a lawsuit — as EC publisher Bill Gaines admitted. "We swiped his stories, and he caught us," he remarked with typical candor when asked about the incident years later.[1] It was, as the British say, a fair cop. Nevertheless, instead of initiating court proceedings, Bradbury chose to send Gaines a good-humored letter (reproduced elsewhere in this volume) inquiring as to the whereabouts of his royalty check.[2] He thereby opened the door to a series of legitimate adaptations. The results, presented for you here in this handsome collection, are now widely regarded as some of the best science fiction comics of the 20th century.

Bradbury's generosity of spirit seems even more remarkable when we consider the dismal literary reputation of comic books during that period. In this, as in so much else, he was farsighted. Unlike most prose writers of his generation, he loved comics unabashedly, and I think he recognized that it was not greed but love that had moved Gaines and Feldstein to their acts of theft.

Having said that, those acts were also undoubtedly driven by deadline desperation, too. To provide some context: Upon his father's untimely death in 1947, Bill Gaines inherited an ailing group of comic book publishing companies known by the "EC" brand colophon on their covers — sometimes "An Educational Comic" (*Picture Stories From American History* and others) and sometimes "An Entertaining Comic" (*Animal Fables* and others). Bill struggled for months just to keep the lights on and ultimately rebranded the entire line under the less virtuously didactic-sounding "Entertaining" banner.

Then, in 1950, he stumbled into success with a group of horror, crime, and science fiction comic book anthology titles. No doubt it was nice to be making some money at last, but the pressure to come up with material for his "New Trend" titles was relentless. To meet the demand, Bill developed a unique way of working with his chief editor, writer, and right-hand man, Al Feldstein.

A voracious consumer of pulp stories in all their forms, Bill would take barebones ideas and concepts from magazines, books, and radio programs that he would present to Al as the germinal seeds or "springboards" for new scripts. Gaines described the process as follows:

> Al and I would sit there, and I'd try to sell him on a springboard. After he had rejected the first thirty-three on general principles, he might show a little interest in number thirty-four. Then I'd give him the hard sell, and he'd run into the next room and start breaking down the plot into story form. He'd normally write a story in three hours, but during those three hours, I'd have a nervous stomach, wondering if Al was going to come in screaming, "I can't write that goddamned plot!" When that happened, it would be early afternoon, and we'd have to start all over again because we simply had to have a complete story by five o'clock.[3]

"This sequential prioritizing of the lettering over the artwork was highly unusual."

It is worth emphasizing that by "complete story," Bill meant that Al needed to deliver not just a script, but six-to-eight handwritten artboards — the captions and dialogue already broken down and placed into a layout of separate panels — to be sent to the letterer by close of business that same day. The artist would then be forwarded those boards to draw the action dictated by the pre-lettered captions and dialogue. This sequential prioritizing of the lettering over the artwork was highly unusual. Indeed, Feldstein might have been the only professional comic book editor in America (and possibly the world) to make comics this way.

Feldstein himself insisted that "we weren't really intending on stealing stuff" when they came up with this working method, but they were looking "for inspiration to give us ideas to come up with something original."[4] Thus, Gaines and Feldstein would weave whole new tales from vivid images that they both liked.

Another device of Bill's was to give just the final scene of a story to Al, from which the writer would work backward, creating a new narrative as he went. The first time they performed this trick with Bradbury's work was for "The Jellyfish" (p. 244), which makes use of the final image of

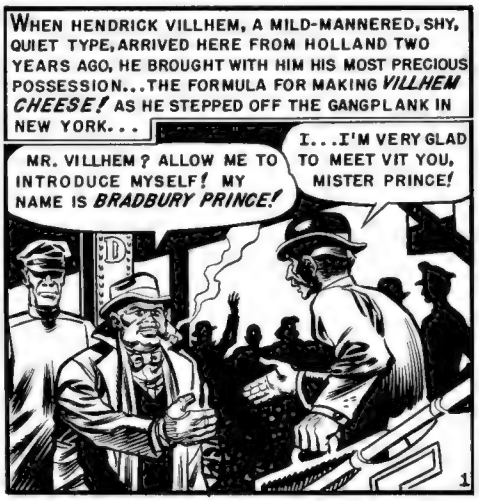
"The Jellyfish!". Art by Jack Davis.

a boneless man in Bradbury's "The Skeleton" from *Dark Carnival*. It's not clear if Bradbury ever noticed this kind of borrowing, which functioned more as the repurposing of a motif rather than as the engine of a plot.

But perhaps inevitably — probably on those days that gave Bill a nervous stomach — they found themselves swiping more than a resonant image from their favorite writer. It started with "A Strange Undertaking!" (p. 58, originally published in *Haunt of Fear* #6) illustrated by Graham Ingels. The entire plot of this story is lifted from Bradbury's "The Handler" (also from *Dark Carnival*). However, a direct comparison of these two narratives about an underhanded undertaker also reveals Feldstein making some interesting changes to Bradbury's tale. Mr. Benedict, the eponymous "Handler" of Bradbury's original, stores up minor grievances by day to justify and fuel his perverse defiling of corpses by night. By contrast, Feldstein's Ezra Deepley is a more pathetic figure, having suffered more genuinely at the hands of the people he must also serve. Thus, where Bradbury offers a chilling study in narcissism and sado-masochism, Feldstein and Ingels produce a revenge tragedy in which cruelty begets cruelty.

The pursuit of "poetic justice" also takes on an almost Fletcher Hanks–style literalism in Feldstein and Ingels's work (the hands of the doctor who botched a procedure on Deepley are replaced with a saw and butcher knife, for example). The tonal result is quite different from Bradbury's original story, which emphasizes psychological as well as visceral horror. But Feldstein's changes also make good sense in the context of adaptation for the medium of comics, providing readers with striking visual metaphors in place of Bradbury's verbal ones.

In a gesture that could seem either deliberately audacious or an unconscious confession of guilt over his thefts, in "Cheese, That's Horrible!" —the final story in the same issue of *Haunt of Fear* — Feldstein chose to name the villain "Bradbury Prince." (It's almost as if he wanted to be found out.) But despite this curiously judged shout-out


WHEN HENDRICK VILLHEM, A MILD-MANNERED, SHY, QUIET TYPE, ARRIVED HERE FROM HOLLAND TWO YEARS AGO, HE BROUGHT WITH HIM HIS MOST PRECIOUS POSSESSION...THE FORMULA FOR MAKING VILLHEM CHEESE! AS HE STEPPED OFF THE GANGPLANK IN NEW YORK...
MR. VILLHEM? ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF! MY NAME IS BRADBURY PRINCE!
I...I'M VERY GLAD TO MEET VIT YOU, MISTER PRINCE!
1

Was Feldstein asking to be caught? A panel from "Cheese, That's Horrible!".

"All told, Gaines and Feldstein would steal material from Bradbury at least seven times before learning that they had been noticed."

to the master, "A Strange Undertaking!" does not seem to have caught Bradbury's attention and was not included in any subsequent authorized EC collections of his tales (although you will find it here), so Gaines and Feldstein went on to make several more trips to Bradbury's well, starting with the Jack Kamen–illustrated story, "What the Dog Dragged In!" (p. 51).

This bleak and pathos-drenched melodrama rewrites Bradbury's "The Emissary," which Feldstein would also have read in the *Dark Carnival* collection. Again, it's not a direct lift — the central protagonist of Bradbury's story is a young, bedridden boy rather than Feldstein and Kamen's wheelchair-bound and blind young woman. Comics historian John Benson attributes this change (somewhat bizarrely) to "Gaines's apparent distrust of children." He also claims (with perhaps more merit) that by aging the protagonist, Feldstein "disastrously excised all the things that made Bradbury's story great," including his "evocation of the mysterious joys of childhood."[5] But, contra Benson, it could also be argued that Feldstein improves upon his source material.

For example, Feldstein takes the time to establish a strong bond of affection between Betty and her visitor, Roger, before Roger is killed. This makes his death more tragic and his ghastly return from the grave all the more horrible for being so desperately desired. Intriguingly, when Bradbury revised "The Emissary" for his 1955 collection, *The October Country*, he seems to have identified the lack of an equivalent affectionate bond between the bedridden boy and his "visitor" (a young and vivacious schoolteacher) as a defect in his first version of the story from *Dark Carnival*. Bradbury's subsequent revision adds new material to create a stronger connection between the boy and his teacher — thereby generating something closer to the emotional effect of Feldstein's unlicensed adaptation.

It may be impossible to establish whether Bradbury had read Feldstein and Kamen's "What the Dog Dragged In" before he reworked "The Emissary." But it is plausible that he might have picked up a back-issue copy of *Vault of Horror* #22 (where the story initially appeared) at some point after establishing his official relationship with EC. If he did, he would not only have noticed that Feldstein had borrowed another of his plots, but also that Feldstein had added something by deepening the emotional bond between the characters. Bradbury may therefore have been following Feldstein's lead when he revised "The Emissary" for republication! Certainly, it is interesting to consider that the direction of influence here may have flowed in both directions, from Bradbury to Feldstein and Kamen, and then back again from Feldstein and Kamen to Bradbury — from prose to comics and from comics back to prose. Turnabout, as they say, is fair play.

DOC WILLIAMS NODDED ANGRILY...
DADDY! DOES EVERYBODY HAVE A HEART... AN' INTESTINES... AN' A STOMACH... AN' BONES?
YES! EVERYBODY! NOW GET TO BED!

"A Lesson in Anatomy!!". Art by Jack Kamen.

All told, Gaines and Feldstein would steal material from Bradbury at least seven times before learning that they had been noticed. In addition to the three examples I've mentioned (the plot of "A Strange Undertaking!", the vivid final image of "The Jellyfish!", the plot of "What The Dog Dragged In!"), we can add the Jack Kamen–illustrated story, "A Lesson In Anatomy!!" (p. 81) that resembles Bradbury's "The Man Upstairs" in its structure and queasy-making focus on the interior workings of the body (something that Kamen nicely conveys through implication rather than graphic revelation); the plot of "Just Desserts," another Kamen story (p. 43) — which turns the slow creep of Bradbury's "The Smiling People" into a less-than-subtle piece of Grand Guignol dinner theater; and the conclusion of "Mad Journey!" (p. 127) — which owes something to the conclusion of Bradbury's "The Earth Men" but is otherwise original (and is also notable as the EC debut of the great artistic team of Al Williamson and Frank Frazetta). And of course, there was "Home to Stay" (p. 135) — the one that finally prompted Bradbury to contact Gaines — which, as noted previously, combines two of his prose stories, "Kaleidoscope" and "The Rocket Man," into a heartstring-tugging tale that uses the conventions of science fiction to allegorize the situation of family kept apart by the demands of work, illustrated in sumptuous detail by Wallace Wood.

In the wake of Bradbury's gentlemanly letter and the establishment of an official arrangement for future adaptations, Feldstein obviously no longer needed to cover his tracks with subtle alterations of the source material. The Crypt-Keeper's introduction to the first official EC adaptation of a Bradbury tale, "The Coffin!" (p. 21, also from *Dark Carnival*), appears to celebrate this new freedom to adapt without embellishment with some typical Feldstein humor. "I'm going to tell you a *yelp-yarn* adapted from *a story by one of America's top fantasy writers ... Ray Bradbury!*" the Crypt-Keeper proudly announces. "*Mr. Bradbury* originally called this yarn '*The Coffin*'! I, being a clever tale-teller myself, call it *The Coffin!*"

In fact, this Bradbury story is itself more humorous than some of the tales Feldstein had previously appropriated — a caricature portrait of fraternal hostility punctuated with moments of dark comedy. (*"I'm finished!" cried old Charlie on the fourteenth morning, and dropped dead.*) This grimly funny tone probably influenced Feldstein's choice of collaborator, the brilliant Jack Davis, whose exaggerated "big foot" approach to comics veered toward humor and parody rather than the more conventionally representational work of Kamen or the hyper-detailed stylings of Wood. (Davis would go on to become one of the most widely circulated of all the EC artists with his

exuberantly witty celebrity portraits for *TV Guide* and movie posters in the 1960s and 1970s.)

But Feldstein also recognized the potential for a less broad treatment of the themes of "The Coffin," and both he and Davis would come back to it again for what EC scholar Bill Mason terms an "unauthorized reworking" entitled "Model Nephew" (p. 66). This version switches out the coffin for a ship in a bottle, and is, as Mason notes, a more "moodily poetic" piece by Feldstein, for which Davis seems to adopt a more "serious manner," curbing some of his instinctively expressionist tendencies.[6] Yet another (unofficial) variation on "The Coffin," "A Work of Art!" (p. 73) is scripted by Carl Wessler — readers of this collection can now compare and contrast all three.

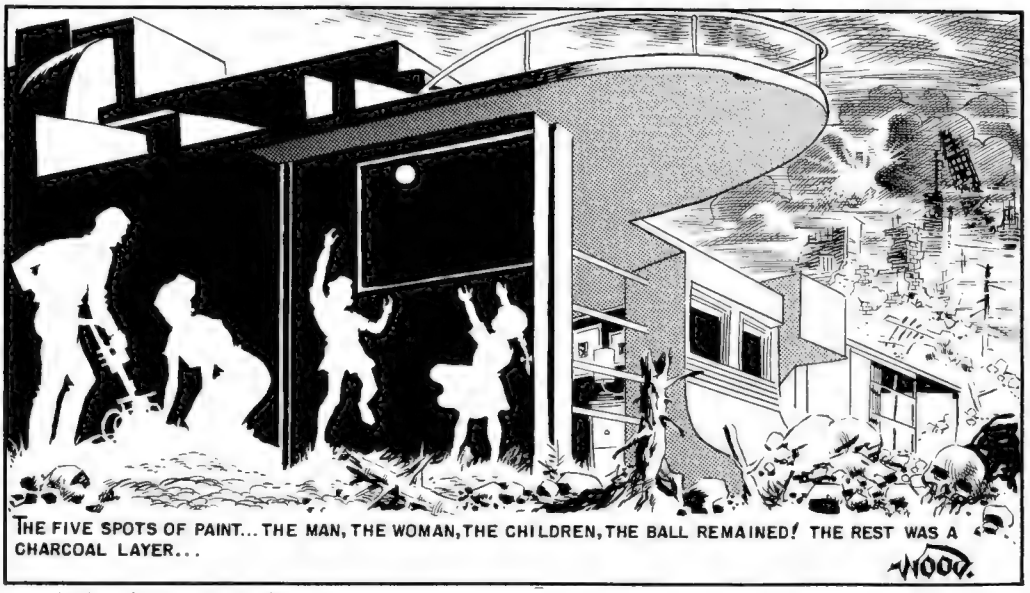
Feldstein clearly considered these questions of stylistic and tonal variation when assigning his adaptations of Bradbury's work to different artists: Davis was the obvious choice if a grotesque humorist was needed; the Alex Raymond–inspired work of Williamson and Frazetta lent itself well to space opera; Ingels's heavy brushwork and old-school-pulp-illustrator style matched nicely with stories set in more "historic" or timeless settings; and Kamen's unostentatious clean-line approach to visual storytelling was perfectly suited to represent the ordinary, quotidian, present-day world suddenly marred by an eruption of horror or violence.

"His pages here are notable ... for the haunting sequence of tableaux-like settings that do not contain a single human figure."

But for "There Will Come Soft Rains..." (p. 112) — one of the best stories from the first group of official EC adaptations — Feldstein turned again to Wallace Wood.

Bradbury's tale, first published in *Collier's* magazine in 1950 and later revised for inclusion in *The Martian Chronicles*, is a bitterly elegiac work of post-apocalyptic literature in which the domestic technology of a future home continues to function, even though the human owners have been wiped out by nuclear war. The title of the story recalls Sara Teasdale's 1918 poem of the same name — a poem that also evokes a world in which mankind has been eradicated by war — while the reference to August 5th at the close of the story is a pointed allusion to the date of the Hiroshima bombing (August 5th, 1945, in the U.S., but August 6 in Japan). Feldstein and Wood's adaptation captures the somber mood of this science fiction classic and deserves to be better known as a key example of U.S. popular culture from the Cold War era.

Wallace Wood — one of the most accomplished illustrators in the entire field of 20th century American comics — grew by leaps and bounds during his tenure at EC. "Home To Stay," the unofficial adaptation that first caught Bradbury's eye, represents an early example of his flowering — the application of graded Zip-A-Tone in the first panel and the movement from middle distance to close-up in the central three panels on the final page are masterful touches. But Bradbury's prose in "There Will Come Soft Rains" as adapted by Feldstein inspired



"There Will Come Soft Rains...". Art by Wallace Wood.

Wood to a bravura display of technique. His pages here are notable not just for the skillful deployment of multiple varieties of Zip-A-Tone throughout, but also for the haunting sequence of tableaux-like settings that do not contain a single human figure.

Wood was also Feldstein's artist of choice for another of EC's more profound and daring science fiction tales, "He Walked Among Us" (p. 156). Although not an official Bradbury adaptation, nor cited as example of unofficial theft, it explores a theme that Bradbury would also examine in "The Man," from *The Martian Chronicles*, and therefore might also be considered an "inspired" work — in every sense of that term.

Many more excellent adaptations followed: Feldstein and Krigstein's "The Flying Machine" (p. 171) prompted a letter of praise from Bradbury himself; the uncannily disturbing and exquisitely paced "The One Who Waits" (p. 222) reveals Al Williamson's rapidly growing skill as a visual storyteller; Johnny Craig's extraordinary "Touch and Go!" (p. 163; later retitled by Bradbury as "The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl") brilliantly illustrates the descent of Bradbury's protagonist into obsessive madness; and so many more, all gathered here for the first time in a single volume.

Gaines, Feldstein, and company would doubtless have continued to adapt Bradbury's works throughout the decade if circumstances had permitted. But as is well known, a national panic over the supposedly negative effects of comics on younger readers was making it increasingly difficult for Gaines to publish and distribute his comics, and it would soon force him out of the four-color comic book business altogether.

That same wave of moral hysteria would also make Bradbury wary of publicizing his association with the industry too overtly, as Thommy Burns notes elsewhere in this volume. Although Bradbury never withdrew permission to adapt his work, public hostility to the comics medium had reached sufficient levels

"[Bradbury] felt compelled to ask Gaines to refrain from putting his name on the covers."

by 1954 that he felt compelled to ask Gaines to refrain from putting his name on the covers. EC's last official adaptation of a Bradbury story, "A Sound of Thunder," appeared later that year in *Weird Science-Fantasy* #25, and though the story was cover-featured on that issue, the Bradbury banner was noticeably absent.[7]

But Feldstein employed his and Gaines's old trick of working backward from the final line of a story one more time, rewriting the conclusion of Bradbury's "October Game" — "Then some idiot turned on the lights." — for the gruesomely sadistic "Blind Alleys" (p. 251). It would be among the last handful of horror stories EC would ever publish, appearing in the final issue of *Tales From the Crypt*. The extent of Bradbury's inspiring influence on Gaines, Feldstein, and company was therefore still apparent — right up to the moment that EC's classic pre–Comics Code output came to an end. ◎

[1] Frank Jacobs, *The Mad World of William M. Gaines* (Lyle Stuart Inc., 1972), p. 80.

[2] At the 1970 San Diego Golden State Comic-Con, Bradbury spoke of how close he came to filing suit. See p. 259.

[3] Jacobs, 77

[4] As cited in the reprint collection, *Vault of Horror Volume 2* (Gemstone Press, 1982), excerpted from a July 16, 1981, interview with Feldstein by John Benson. The volume is unpaginated, but the relevant quotations appear on the verso page prior to issue #22. For the full interview, see *The Comics Journal Library Volume 10: The EC Artists Part 2* (Fantagraphics Books, 2016).

[5] Ibid.

[6] Bill Mason, *Haunt of Fear Volume 3* (Gemstone Press, 1985), unpaginated (verso page prior to #17).

[7] Feldstein's adaptation omits the final paragraph of the story as it appears in Bradbury's collection *The Golden Apples of the Sun* (1953), which has inspired speculation that the story might have been censored by the newly established Comics Code Authority; however, the *Collier's* edition of the story from 1952 also omits the last paragraph, so it seems likely Feldstein was simply working from that earlier version.

Professor Ben Saunders founded the Undergraduate Minor in Comics Studies at the University of Oregon. He is the author of *Desiring Donne* (Harvard University Press, 2006) and *Do The Gods Wear Capes?: Spirituality, Fantasy, and Superheroes* (Continuum, 2011), and co-editor of *Rock Over The Edge: Transformations in Popular Music Culture* (Duke University Press, 2002) with Roger Beebe and Denise Fulbrook, *Comic Book Apocalypse: The Graphic Worlds of Jack Kirby* (IDW, 2015) with Charles Hatfield, and *The Art of the News: Comics Journalism* (Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, 2022), with Katherine Kelp-Stebbins. He has also curated several groundbreaking exhibitions of comics art, including "Aliens, Monsters, and Madmen: The Art of EC" (Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, 2016) and the multi-media touring show "Marvel: Universe of Super Heroes" (which launched at MoPop in Seattle in 2018). His essay on Wallace Wood's signature EC story, "My World," can be found in *The Life and Legend of Wallace Wood* Volume 2 (Fantagraphics, 2018).

RAY'S WAY

by J. Michael Catron

Between 1951 and 1955, EC Comics published 35 six-to-eight-page comics stories that variously adapted, plagiarized, were influenced by, or were inspired by Ray Bradbury's work. Bradbury caught on to the plagiarisms in 1952, and they worked things out to everyone's satisfaction. You can read about that elsewhere in this volume.

But EC's Bradbury stories were published in no particular order, dependent upon whatever story was most fitting and expedient for the next artist to meet the exigency of the next deadline. (And there was always a next deadline.)

So in putting together this comprehensive compilation of these Bradbury-inspired-and-influenced tales, we felt compelled to follow his original intent. Consequently, you will find his officially adapted stories from *Dark Carnival* in one section, his stories from The *Martian Chronicles* in another, and the same for *The Illustrated Man* and *The Golden Apples of the Sun*. Most of those sections then has its own "Variations" section for the other stories from those books that weren't quite "official" for one reason or another.

Next, you'll find the rest of the official Bradbury adaptations, which were not part of those first three short-story collections, in the order in which the original prose versions first saw print. Finally, we present two unique tales that were inspired by Bradbury's work but were original riffs on Bradbury's ideas.

But riff-on, rip-off, or right-on, all these stories, most scripted by Al Feldstein, were lovingly illustrated by the highly talented and fiercely dedicated artists of EC Comics and are best enjoyed as new stories in their own right.

We also present a special treat — a gallery of the complete artwork for "The Long Years," reproduced here to show you exactly what it would look like if you held Joe Orlando's original pen-and-ink pages in your own hands.

♦ ♦ ♦

Ray Bradbury and the artists and writers who created these stories, of course, made this book possible, but it wouldn't be what it is without the contributions of the others who have graciously shared their memories, their insights, and their collections to make this book special.

Greg Bear starts us off with his heartfelt remembrance of his friend and colleague for more than four decades. The photo of Bradbury that accompanies Greg's article is by the late Clay Geerdes and is published here for the first time.

Ben Saunders gets to the heart of the matter by staking out the extremes of adaptation and plagiarism — and filling the gulf in between.

After the stories, we present EC's biography of Bradbury, with its contemporaneous photo, exactly as it appeared in 1953. Bradbury himself chimes in with his freewheeling firsthand account of how he moved the stories in this book from unauthorized to authorized, seeing and seizing upon an opportunity where others with less imagination might have seen only a lawsuit that would have led to misery for all involved.

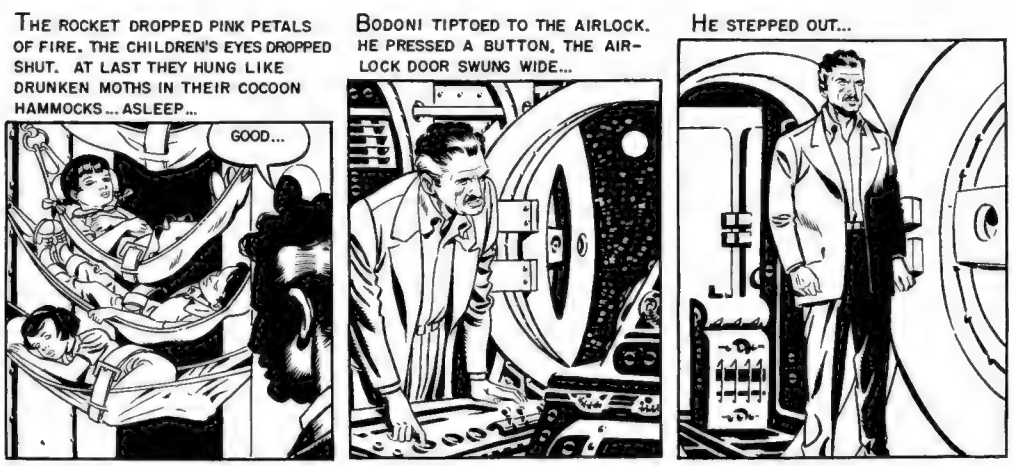
Ted White, who faithfully paid his monthly dimes as a teenager to read these stories as they first came out, explains the challenges Bradbury faced as a young writer trying to stake his claim on the literary landscape.

Thommy Burns and Bill Mason, experts on all things EC, share their insights on the readers' reactions and artist Wallace Wood's methods of translating these stories from prose to pictures.

Next, we are proud to present a spectacular gallery of covers and artwork by a few of the EC artists who brought these stories to vivid life on the comics page. Special thanks are due here for the generosity of Grant Geissman and Frank Frazetta Jr. in making this happen.

Finally, we salute all the artists and writers in this book with a series of biographical shorts celebrating the lives they lived.

So go ahead, turn the page. Dare to walk through that darkened doorway. Climb aboard that rickety rocket ship. Chills, thrills, and wonders await. ◎


THE ROCKET DROPPED PINK PETALS OF FIRE. THE CHILDREN'S EYES DROPPED SHUT. AT LAST THEY HUNG LIKE DRUNKEN MOTHS IN THEIR COCOON HAMMOCKS... ASLEEP...
GOOD...
BODONI TIPTOED TO THE AIRLOCK. HE PRESSED A BUTTON. THE AIRLOCK DOOR SWUNG WIDE...
HE STEPPED OUT...

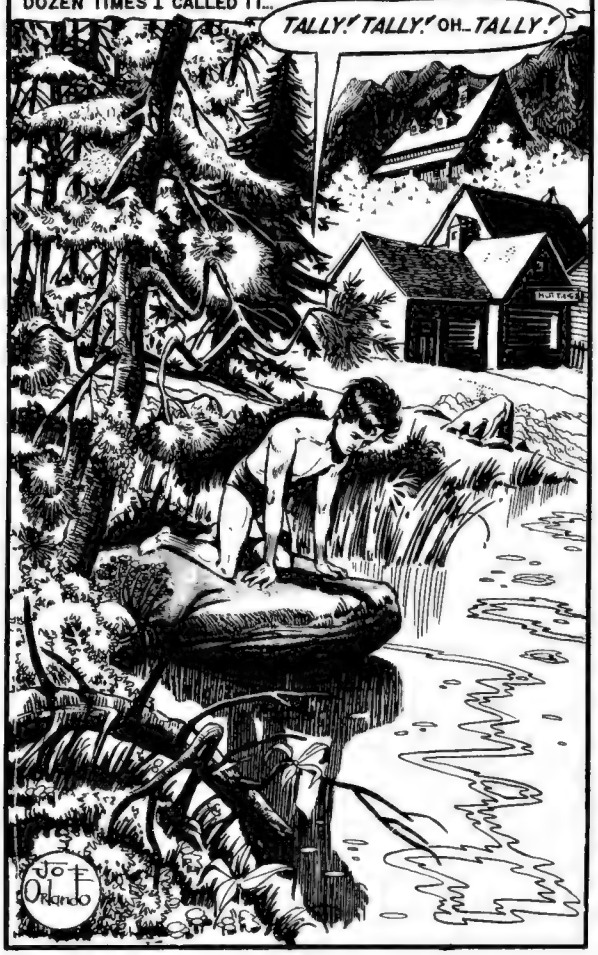
"Outcast of the Stars." Art by Joe Orlando.

STORIES FROM
DARK CARNIVAL

HERE IS MY ADAPTATION OF
RAY BRADBURY'S...

The Lake

IT WAS SEPTEMBER... IN THE LAST DAYS WHEN THINGS ARE GETTING SAD FOR NO REASON. THE BEACH WAS LONG AND LONELY. ALL OF THE HOT DOG STANDS WERE BOARDED UP WITH STRIPS OF GOLDEN PLANKING, SEALING IN THE MUSTARD, ONION, MEAT ODORS OF THE LONG, JOYFUL SUMMER. IT WAS LIKE NAILING SUMMER INTO A SERIES OF COFFINS. THE WIND HAD COME AND TOUCHED THE SAND, BLOWING AWAY ALL OF THE MILLION FOOTPRINTS OF JULY AND AUGUST. I WAS ALONE. I CALLED HER NAME. A DOZEN TIMES I CALLED IT...



EVERYONE ELSE WAS IN SCHOOL. I WAS NOT. TOMORROW, I WOULD BE ON MY WAY WEST ON A TRAIN. I HAD COME TO THE BEACH FOR ONE LAST BRIEF MOMENT. I WENT DOWN TO THE WATER AND LET IT COOL UP TO MY STOMACH. ALWAYS BEFORE, WITH THE CROWD, I HADN'T DARED TO LOOK, TO COME TO THIS SPOT AND SEARCH AROUND IN THE WATER AND CALL HER NAME. BUT NOW...

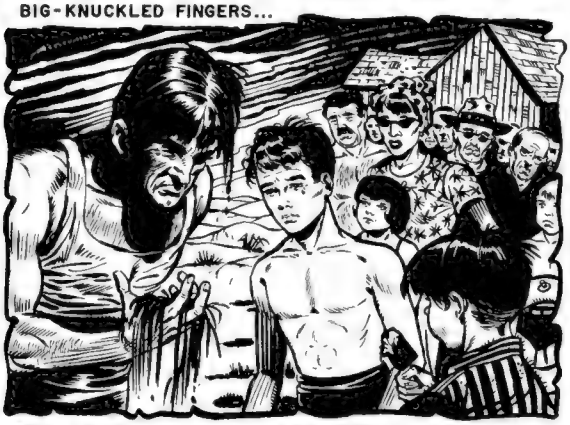
FUNNY, BUT YOU REALLY EXPECT ANSWERS TO YOUR CALLING WHEN YOU ARE YOUNG. YOU FEEL THAT WHATEVER YOU MAY THINK CAN BE REAL. AND SOMETIMES, THAT IS NOT SO WRONG. I THOUGHT OF TALLY, SWIMMING OUT INTO THE WATER... LAST MAY...

TALLY...WITH HER PIGTAILS TRAILING, BLONDE. SHE WAS LAUGHING, AND THE SUN WAS ON HER SMALL TWELVE-YEAR-OLD SHOULDERS...

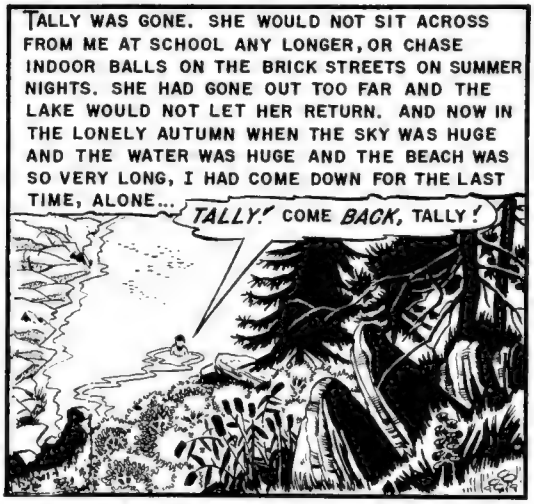
I THOUGHT OF THE WATER SETTLING QUIET...

...OF THE LIFEGUARD LEAPING INTO IT... OF TALLY'S MOTHER SCREAMING...

TALLY NEVER CAME OUT. THE LIFEGUARD TRIED TO PERSUADE HER TO COME OUT, BUT SHE DID NOT. HE CAME BACK WITH ONLY BITS OF WATER-WEED IN HIS BIG-KNUCKLED FINGERS...

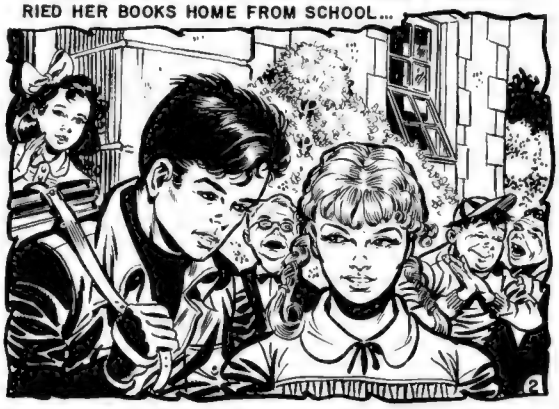


TALLY WAS GONE. SHE WOULD NOT SIT ACROSS FROM ME AT SCHOOL ANY LONGER, OR CHASE INDOOR BALLS ON THE BRICK STREETS ON SUMMER NIGHTS. SHE HAD GONE OUT TOO FAR AND THE LAKE WOULD NOT LET HER RETURN. AND NOW IN THE LONELY AUTUMN WHEN THE SKY WAS HUGE AND THE WATER WAS HUGE AND THE BEACH WAS SO VERY LONG, I HAD COME DOWN FOR THE LAST TIME, ALONE...

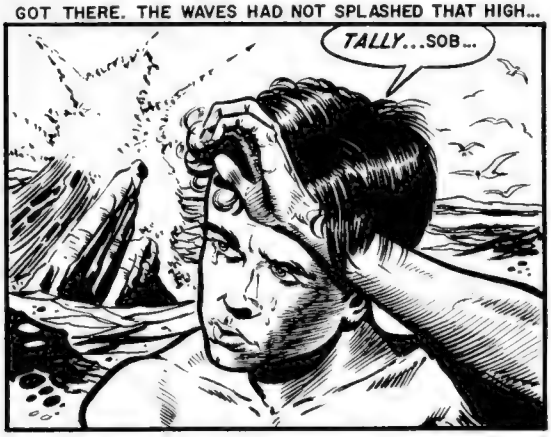


I WAS ONLY TWELVE. BUT I KNOW HOW MUCH I LOVED HER. IT WAS THAT LOVE THAT COMES BEFORE ALL SIGNIFICANCE OF BODY AND MORALS. IT WAS A LOVE THAT WAS MADE OF WARM LONG DAYS TOGETHER AT THE BEACH...

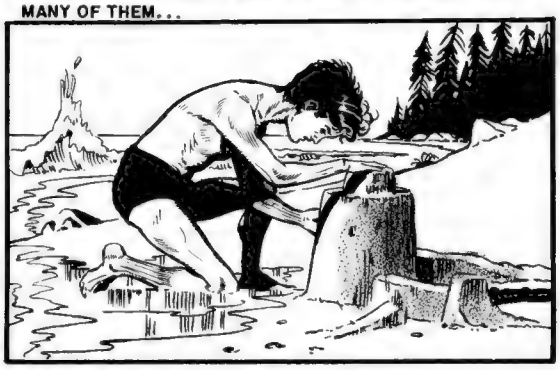
IT WAS MADE OF THE HUMMING QUIET DAYS OF DRONING EDUCATION AT THE SCHOOL, AND ALL THE LONG AUTUMN DAYS OF THE YEARS PAST WHEN I HAD CARRIED HER BOOKS HOME FROM SCHOOL...



I CALLED HER NAME FOR THE LAST TIME. I SHIVERED. I FELT WATER ON MY FACE AND DID NOT KNOW HOW IT GOT THERE. THE WAVES HAD NOT SPLASHED THAT HIGH...



TURNING, I RETREATED TO THE SAND AND STOOD THERE FOR HALF AN HOUR, HOPING FOR ONE GLIMPSE, ONE SIGN, ONE LITTLE BIT OF TALLY TO REMEMBER. THEN, I KNELT AND BUILT A SAND CASTLE, SHAPING IT FINE, BUILDING IT AS TALLY AND I HAD OFTEN BUILT SO MANY OF THEM...



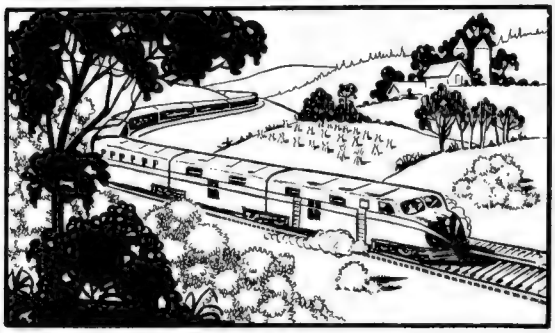
BUT THIS TIME, I ONLY BUILT HALF A SAND CASTLE. THEN I GOT UP...

AFTER A WHILE, THE WATER CAME IN...

...BLENDING THE SAND-CASTLE, MASHING IT DOWN, LITTLE BY LITTLE, INTO THE ORIGINAL SMOOTHNESS...

SILENTLY I WALKED ALONG THE SHORE. FAR AWAY, A MERRY-GO-ROUND JANGLED FAINTLY...BUT IT WAS ONLY THE WIND...

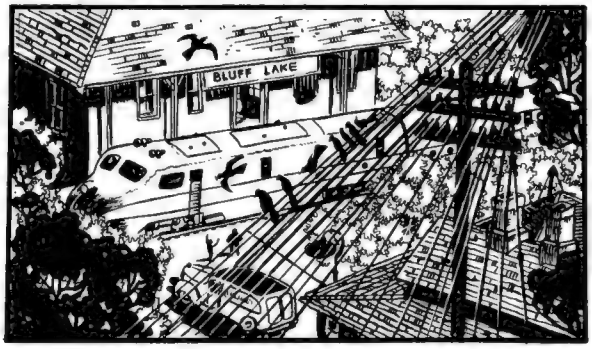
THE NEXT DAY I WENT AWAY ON THE TRAIN. A TRAIN HAS POOR MEMORY. IT SOON PUTS ALL BEHIND IT. IT FORGETS THE CORN LANDS AND RIVERS OF CHILDHOOD, THE BRIDGES, THE LAKES, THE VALLEYS, THE COTTAGES, THE HURTS AND THE JOYS. IT SPREADS THEM OUT BEHIND AND THEY DROP BACK OF THE HORIZON...



I LENGTHENED MY BONES, PUT FLESH ON THEM, CHANGED MY YOUNG MIND FOR AN OLDER ONE, THREW AWAY CLOTHES AS THEY NO LONGER FITTED, SHIFTED FROM GRAMMAR TO HIGH SCHOOL, TO COLLEGE BOOKS, TO LAW BOOKS...

AND THEN THERE WAS A YOUNG WOMAN...MARGARET... IN SACRAMENTO. I KNEW HER FOR A TIME, AND WE WERE MARRIED...

AND WE CAME BACK...BACK TO LAKE BLUFF... FOR OUR HONEY-MOON. LIKE A MEMORY, A TRAIN WORKS BOTH WAYS. A TRAIN CAN BRING RUSHING BACK ALL THOSE THINGS YOU LEFT BEHIND SO MANY YEARS BEFORE...



LAKE BLUFF, POPULATION 10,000, CAME UP OVER THE SKY. MARGARET LOOKED SO HANDSOME IN HER FINE NEW CLOTHES. SHE WATCHED ME AS I FELT MY OLD WORLD GATHER ME BACK INTO ITS LIVING. SHE HELD MY ARM AS THE TRAIN SLID INTO BLUFF STATION, AND OUR BAGGAGE WAS ESCORTED OUT...

WE STAYED ON TWO WEEKS IN ALL, REVISITING ALL THE PLACES TOGETHER. THE DAYS WERE HAPPY. I THOUGHT I LOVED MARGARET WELL. AT LEAST I THOUGHT I DID. IT WAS ON ONE OF THE LAST DAYS THAT WE WALKED DOWN BY THE SHORE...

I HAD THAT FEELING AGAIN OF WANTING TO BE ALONE, BUT I COULD NOT FORCE MYSELF TO SPEAK OF THIS TO MARGARET...

IT WAS LATE IN THE DAY. THE BEACH WAS ALMOST DESERTED. THE LIFEGUARD BOAT PULLED UP ON THE SHORE. THE LIFEGUARD STEPPED OUT OF IT, SLOWLY, WITH SOMETHING IN HIS ARMS...

I FROZE THERE. I HELD MY BREATH AND I FELT SMALL... ONLY TWELVE YEARS OLD, VERY LITTLE, VERY INFINITESIMAL AND AFRAID...

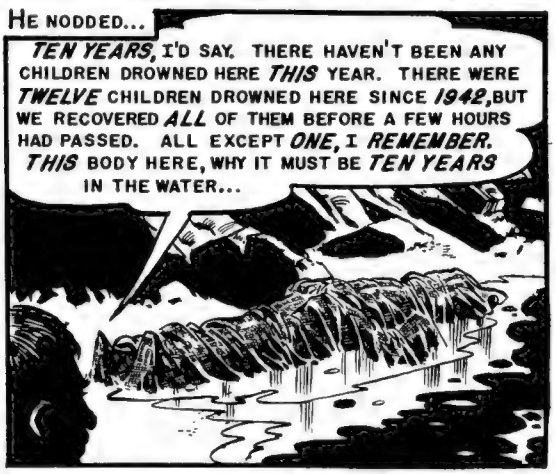
THE WIND HOWLED. I COULD NOT SEE MARGARET. I COULD SEE ONLY THE BEACH, THE LIFEGUARD SLOWLY EMERGING FROM THE BOAT WITH A GREY SACK IN HIS HANDS, NOT VERY HEAVY, AND HIS FACE ALMOST AS GREY AND LINED...

I WALKED SLOWLY DOWN THE SAND TO WHERE THE LIFEGUARD STOOD. HE LOOKED AT ME...

THE LIFEGUARD KEPT LOOKING AT ME FOR A LONG TIME AND HE COULDN'T SPEAK. HE PUT THE GREY SACK DOWN ON THE SAND, AND THE WATER WHISPERED WET UP AROUND IT AND WENT BACK...

I WAITED...

HE NODDED...


TEN YEARS, I'D SAY. THERE HAVEN'T BEEN ANY CHILDREN DROWNED HERE *THIS* YEAR. THERE WERE *TWELVE* CHILDREN DROWNED HERE SINCE *1942*, BUT WE RECOVERED *ALL* OF THEM BEFORE A FEW HOURS HAD PASSED. ALL EXCEPT *ONE*, I *REMEMBER*. *THIS* BODY HERE, WHY IT MUST BE *TEN YEARS* IN THE WATER...

I STARED AT THE SACK. THE WIND WAS LOUD...

THEN, PERHAPS HE SAW THE WAY MY FACE MUST HAVE LOOKED. HE FUMBLED WITH THE SACK, OPENING IT ONLY PART WAY. IT WAS ENOUGH. THERE WAS ONLY THE SKY AND THE WIND AND THE WATER AND AUTUMN COMING ON LONELY. I LOOKED DOWN AT HER THERE...

I THOUGHT...

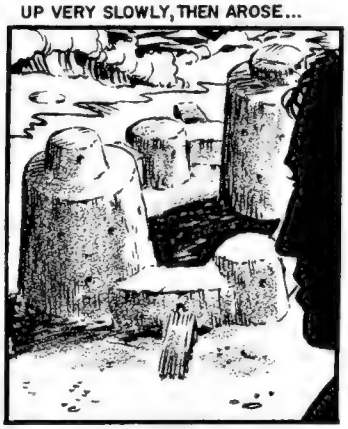
PEOPLE *GROW*. *I* HAVE GROWN. BUT *SHE* HAS NOT CHANGED. SHE IS STILL *SMALL*. DEATH DOES NOT *PERMIT* GROWTH OR CHANGE. SHE STILL HAS GOLDEN HAIR. SHE WILL BE *FOREVER* YOUNG AND I WILL *LOVE* HER FOREVER, OH GOD, I WILL *LOVE HER FOREVER*.

THE LIFEGUARD TIED UP THE SACK. I WALKED BY MYSELF, DOWN THE BEACH, DOWN TOWARD WHERE HE'D FOUND HER. THERE, AT THE WATER'S EDGE, LAY A SAND CASTLE, *ONLY HALF-BUILT*...

JUST LIKE TALLY AND I USED TO BUILD THEM. SHE HALF... AND I HALF. I LOOKED AT IT. I KNELT BESIDE IT AND I SAW THE LITTLE PRINTS OF FEET COMING IN FROM THE LAKE AND GOING BACK OUT TO THE LAKE AGAIN AND NOT EVER RETURNING...

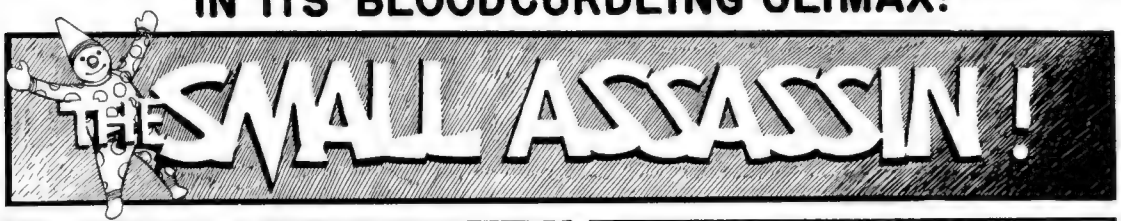
AND THEN... I KNEW...

I DID. I BUILT THE REST OF IT UP VERY SLOWLY, THEN AROSE...



... AND TURNED AWAY AND WALKED OFF, SO AS NOT TO WATCH IT CRUMBLE IN THE WAVES THE WAY ALL THINGS CRUMBLE. I WALKED BACK UP THE BEACH TO WHERE A STRANGE WOMAN NAMED MARGARET WAITED FOR ME, SMILING...

HERE IS A TALE OF TENSION WITH SHEER HORROR IN ITS BLOODCURDLING CLIMAX!



JUST WHEN THE IDEA OCCURED TO HER THAT SHE WAS BEING MURDERED SHE COULD NOT TELL. THERE HAD BEEN LITTLE SUBTLE SIGNS, LITTLE SUSPICIONS FOR THE PAST MONTH; THINGS AS DEEP AS SEA TIDES IN HER. BUT NOW THE ROOM FLOATED AROUND HER IN AN EFFLUVIUM OF HYSTERIA. SHARP INSTRUMENTS HOVERED AND THERE WERE VOICES AND PEOPLE IN STERILE WHITE MASKS. SHE WAS ALONE WITH THOSE SILENT WHITE PEOPLE AND THERE WAS GREAT PAIN AND NAUSEA AND DEATH-FEAR IN HER. AND SHE THOUGHT TO HERSELF...

I AM BEING *MURDERED* BEFORE THEIR *EYES!* THESE DOCTORS, THESE NURSES DON'T *REALIZE* WHAT HIDDEN THING HAS *HAPPENED* TO ME! *DAVID* DOESN'T KNOW! *NO ONE* KNOWS EXCEPT *ME*... AND...THE *KILLER*, THE *LITTLE MURDERER*, *THE SMALL ASSASSIN!*

A HORROR SUSPENSTORY
ADAPTED FROM A TALE BY
RAY BRADBURY

FOOTSTEPS. GENTLE, APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS. THE SOUND OF PEOPLE TRYING TO BE QUIET. AN ODOR OF TWEEDS, A PIPE, A CERTAIN SHAVING LOTION. SHE KNEW DAVID WAS STANDING OVER HER. AND BEYOND, THE IMMACULATE ODOR OF DR. JEFFERS. AND SHE THOUGHT TO HERSELF...

WOULD YOU LIKE TO *MEET* THE MURDERER, DAVID? *WOULD* YOU?

ALICE? ARE YOU *AWAKE?*

RED CROSS

ALICE OPENED HER EYES. THE ROOM CAME INTO FOCUS. MOVING A WEAK HAND, SHE PULLED ASIDE THE COVERLET. THE 'MURDERER' LOOKED UP AT DAVID WITH A SMALL RED-FACED, BLUE-EYED CALM...

WHY... WHY HE'S A *FINE* BABY, ALICE!

GEORGE EVANS

DR. JEFFERS WAS WAITING FOR DAVID THE DAY HE SHOWED UP AT THE HOSPITAL TO TAKE HIS WIFE AND NEW CHILD HOME. HE MOTIONED DAVID INTO A CHAIR IN HIS OFFICE, SAT ON THE EDGE OF HIS DESK, AND LOOKED DAVID STRAIGHT IN THE EYE...

DR. JEFFERS CONTINUED...

IT'S BEEN A HARD THING FOR HER. THE WHOLE THING. SHE'LL NEED A LOT OF *LOVE* IN THIS NEXT YEAR. I DIDN'T *MENTION* IT AT THE TIME, BUT SHE WAS *HYSTERICAL* IN THE DELIVERY ROOM. I WON'T *REPEAT* WHAT SHE SAID. ALL I'LL SAY IS THAT SHE *FEELS* ALIEN TOWARD THE CHILD. IS...IS THIS CHILD A *WANTED* CHILD, DAVID?

YES! *YES*, IT'S A *'WANTED'* CHILD. IT WAS *PLANNED*. WE PLANNED IT *TOGETHER!* ALICE WAS SO *HAPPY* A YEAR AGO WHEN...
IT MUST BE SOMETHING *ELSE*, THEN! PERHAPS SOMETHING BURIED IN HER *CHILD-HOOD*. IN ANY CASE, IF SHE *SAYS* ANYTHING ABOUT... WELL...ABOUT WISHING THE CHILD HAD BEEN BORN *DEAD*, SMOOTH IT OVER, WILL YOU, SON?

SUPPERTIME...SOMETIME LATER. DAVID HAD BROUGHT THE CHILD FROM THE NURSERY, PROPPED HIM AT A TINY, BEWILDERED ANGLE, SUPPORTED BY MANY PILLOWS, IN A NEWLY PURCHASED HIGH CHAIR...

HE'S NOT *HIGH-CHAIR SIZE* YET, DAVID!
FUN *HAVING* HIM HERE, ANYWAY. *EVERYTHING'S* FUN. AT THE *OFFICE*, TOO. HEY, *LOOK* AT JUNIOR, WILL YOU? *DROOLING* ALL DOWN HIS *CHIN*.

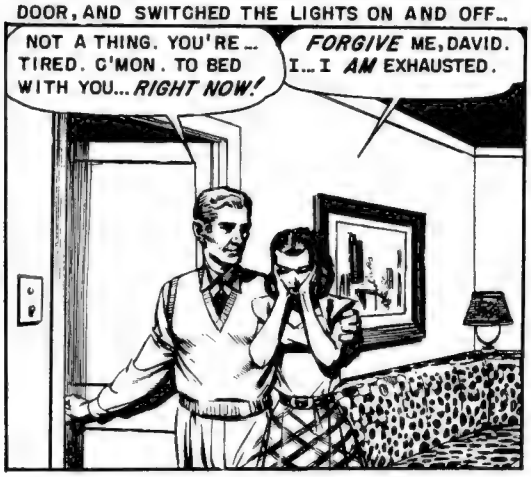
DAVID REACHED OVER TO DAB AT THE BABY'S CHIN WITH HIS NAPKIN. FROM THE CORNER OF HIS EYE, HE REALIZED THAT ALICE WASN'T EVEN WATCHING. HE FINISHED THE JOB AND WENT BACK TO HIS FOOD...

I GUESS IT *WASN'T* VERY *INTERESTING!* BUT, ONE WOULD THINK A MOTHER'D TAKE SOME *INTEREST* IN HER OWN CHILD, *WOULDN'T* ONE?
DON'T *SPEAK* THAT WAY! NOT IN *FRONT OF HIM! LATER*, IF YOU *MUST!*

AFTER DINNER, ALICE LET DAVID CARRY THE BABY UPSTAIRS. WHEN HE CAME DOWN, SHE WAS STANDING BY THE RADIO, LISTENING TO MUSIC SHE WASN'T HEARING...

SUDDENLY ALICE STOPPED. HER ARMS DROPPED AND SHE TURNED SWIFTLY...

DAVID CROSSED THE ROOM, OPENED THE LIBRARY DOOR, AND SWITCHED THE LIGHTS ON AND OFF...



TURNING OUT THE LIGHTS TOGETHER, THEY WALKED QUIETLY UP THE SOUNDLESS HALL STAIRS, NOT SPEAKING. ALICE PAUSED, UNDECIDED, BY THE BEDROOM DOOR. THEN, FINGERING THE BRASS KNOB SHARPLY, WALKED IN. DAVID WATCHED HER APPROACH THE CRIB MUCH TOO CAREFULLY, LOOK DOWN, AND STIFFEN AS IF SHE'D BEEN STRUCK IN THE FACE...

DAVID REACHED THE CRIB AND LOOKED DOWN. THE BABY'S FACE WAS BRIGHT RED AND VERY MOIST. BRIGHT BLUE EYES STARED AS IF BEING STRANGLED OUTWARD...

DAVID UNDRESSED SILENTLY AND SAT ON THE EDGE OF THE BED. SUDDENLY, HE SNAPPED HIS FINGERS.

HE WAS IN BED NOW. SHE DARKENED THE ROOM. HE HEARD HER WALK AROUND THE BED, THROW BACK CRISP SHEETS, AND SLIDE IN...

BEFORE HE COULD ANSWER... BEFORE HE COULD TELL HER HOW SILLY IT WAS, ALICE SWITCHED ON THE BED LIGHT, ABRUPTLY...

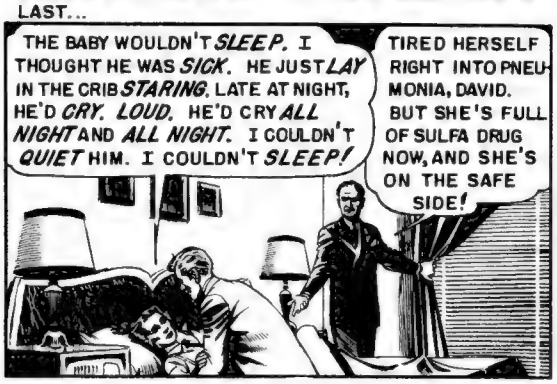
THE BABY LAY WIDE AWAKE IN ITS CRIB, STARING STRAIGHT AT THEM WITH DEEP SHARP BLUE EYES. THE EYES CLOSED. THE LIGHT WENT OUT AGAIN. SHE TREMBLED AGAINST HIM...

IT'S NOT NICE BEING AFRAID OF THE THING YOU BIRTHED... BUT HE TRIED TO KILL ME! HE LIES THERE LISTENING TO US TALKING, WAITING FOR YOU TO GO AWAY SO HE CAN TRY TO KILL ME AGAIN! I SWEAR IT!
PLEASE! STOP IT! STOP IT! PLEASE!
3

THE AIRPLANE WENT EAST WITH DAVID. THERE WAS A LOT OF SKY, A LOT OF CLOUDS, AND THEN CHICAGO CAME RUNNING OVER THE HORIZON. DAVID WAS DROPPED DOWN INTO A RUSH OF ORDERS, CONFERENCES, PLANNING, BANQUETING. AND THEN, ON HIS SIXTH DAY AWAY, HE RECEIVED A LONG-DISTANCE PHONE CALL...

ALICE?
NO, DAVE. THIS IS *DR. JEFFERS* SPEAKING. HOLD *ONTO* YOURSELF, SON. ALICE IS *SICK!* YOU'D BETTER GET THE NEXT PLANE HOME. IT'S *PNEUMONIA!* I'LL DO EVERYTHING I *CAN*, BOY. IF ONLY IT WASN'T SO *SOON* AFTER THE *BABY!* SHE NEEDS *STRENGTH!*

THE AIRPLANE WENT WEST, AND CALIFORNIA CAME UP, AND OUT OF THE TWISTING CIRCULAR METAL OF PROPELLERS CAME A VIBRATING SUDDEN MATERIALIZATION OF ALICE LYING IN BED, DR. JEFFERS STANDING AT THE WINDOW, AND THE REALITY OF DAVID BEING THERE AT LAST...


THE BABY WOULDN'T *SLEEP.* I THOUGHT HE WAS *SICK.* HE JUST *LAY* IN THE CRIB *STARING.* LATE AT NIGHT, HE'D *CRY. LOUD.* HE'D CRY *ALL NIGHT* AND *ALL NIGHT.* I COULDN'T *QUIET* HIM. I COULDN'T *SLEEP!*
TIRED HERSELF RIGHT INTO PNEUMONIA, DAVID. BUT SHE'S FULL OF SULFA DRUG NOW, AND SHE'S ON THE SAFE SIDE!

AFTER DOCTOR JEFFERS LEFT, ALICE CONFIDED IN DAVID...

IT WAS THE *BABY,* AGAIN, DAVID. I *TRIED* TO *LIE* TO MYSELF... *CONVINCE* MYSELF I'M A FOOL. BUT THE BABY *KNEW* I WAS WEAK FROM THE HOSPITAL. SO HE *CRIED* ALL NIGHT. AND WHEN HE *WASN'T* CRYING, HE'D BE *TOO QUIET.* IF I SWITCHED THE *LIGHT* ON, HE'D *BE* THERE, *STARING* AT ME.

THE NEXT MORNING, DAVID WENT TO SEE DR. JEFFERS AND TOLD HIM THE WHOLE THING, AND LISTENED TO JEFFERS' TOLERANT REPLIES...

..SO ALICE HATES THE BABY!
THE BEST WAY TO PUT IT IS THAT SHE HAS AN *OBSESSION.* A CAESAREAN OPERATION *BROUGHT* THE CHILD *INTO* THE WORLD, AND ALMOST *TOOK* ALICE *OUT* OF IT. SHE BLAMES THE *CHILD* FOR HER *NEAR-DEATH* AND HER *PNEUMONIA.* WE *ALL* DO IT. WE STUMBLE INTO A *CHAIR* AND CURSE THE *FURNITURE,* MISS A *GOLF STROKE* AND BLAME THE *CLUB*...

ONE NIGHT, AFTER THE BABY'S CRIB HAD BEEN MOVED TO THE NURSERY, ALICE WAKENED, TREMBLING, AND SLID INTO HER HUSBAND'S ARMS...

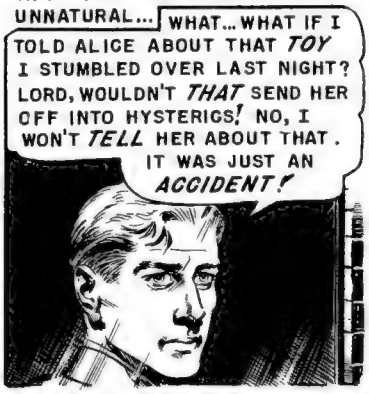
HE HELD HER UNTIL SHE FELL ASLEEP AGAIN. THEN HE HEARD THE BEDROOM DOOR SWAY OPEN A FEW INCHES. THERE WAS NOBODY AT THE DOOR. NO REASON FOR IT TO COME OPEN. NO WIND...

HE WAITED. IT SEEMED LIKE AN HOUR HE LAY SILENTLY, IN THE DARK. THEN, FAR AWAY, WAILING LIKE SOME METEOR DYING IN THE VAST INKY GULF OF SPACE, THE BABY BEGAN TO CRY IN HIS NURSERY...

CAREFULLY DISENGAGING ALICE'S GRIP, HE SLIPPED OUT OF BED, PUT ON HIS SLIPPERS, ROBE, AND TIP-TOED OUT OF THE ROOM TO THE STAIRS. THE BLACKNESS DROPPED OUT FROM UNDER HIM. HIS FOOT SLIPPED ON SOMETHING SOFT... SLIPPED AND PLUNGED INTO NOTHINGNESS...

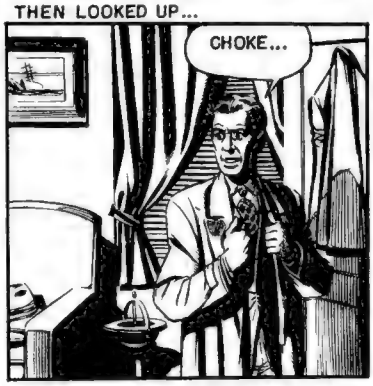
HE THRUST HIS HANDS OUT, CAUGHT FRANTICALLY AT THE RAILING. HIS BODY STOPPED FALLING. HE HELD. HE CURSED. THE 'SOMETHING SOFT' THAT HAD CAUSED HIS FEET TO SLIP RUSTLED AND THUMPED DOWN A FEW STEPS AND STOPPED. HIS HEAD RANG. HIS HEART HAMMERED AT THE BASE OF HIS THROAT, THICK AND SHOT WITH PAIN. HE PICKED IT UP. HIS HAND FROZE, STARTLED. HIS BREATH WENT IN. HIS HEART HELD ONE OR TWO BEATS. THE THING HE HELD IN HIS HAND WAS A *TOY*... A LARGE CUMBERSOME, PATCHWORK DOLL HE'D BOUGHT AS A *JOKE* FOR...

THE NEXT DAY WENT UNEASILY. HE KEPT SEEING ALICE ALL THE TIME, MIXED INTO EVERYTHING HE LOOKED AT. SO MUCH OF HER FEAR HAD COME OVER TO HIM NOW. SHE ACTUALLY HAD *HIM* CONVINCED THAT THE CHILD WAS SOMEWHAT UNNATURAL...

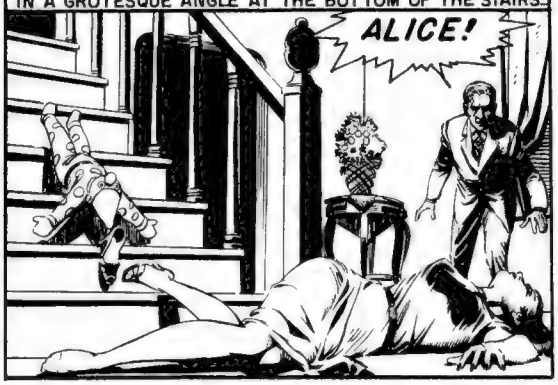

WHAT... WHAT IF I TOLD ALICE ABOUT THAT *TOY* I STUMBLED OVER LAST NIGHT? LORD, WOULDN'T *THAT* SEND HER OFF INTO HYSTERICS! NO, I WON'T *TELL* HER ABOUT THAT. IT WAS JUST AN *ACCIDENT!*

THAT NIGHT, DAVID TOOK A TAXI HOME. AS HE WALKED SLOWLY UP THE CEMENT WALK, ENJOYING THE LIGHT THAT WAS IN THE SKY AND THE TREES, THE WHITE COLONIAL FRONT OF THE HOUSE LOOKED UNNATURALLY SILENT AND UNINHABITED...

ONCE INSIDE, HE PUT HIS HAT ON THE CHAIR WITH HIS BRIEFCASE, STARTED TO SHRUG OFF HIS COAT, THEN LOOKED UP...



LATE SUNLIGHT STREAMED DOWN THE STAIRWELL FROM THE WINDOW AT THE TOP OF THE HOUSE ... ILLUMINATING THE PATCHWORK DOLL THAT SPRAWLED IN A GROTESQUE ANGLE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS.



ALICE LAY IN A BROKEN, PALLID GESTURING AND ANGLING OF HER THIN BODY. SHE WAS LYING AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS, LIKE A CRUMPLED DOLL WHO DOESN'T WANT TO PLAY ANY MORE... EVER. ALICE WAS DEAD...

HE HELD HER IN HIS ARMS. BUT SHE WOULDN'T LIVE. SHE WOULDN'T TRY TO LIVE. HE SAID HER NAME OUT LOUD MANY TIMES, BUT IT DIDN'T HELP. SHE WAS DEAD! 5

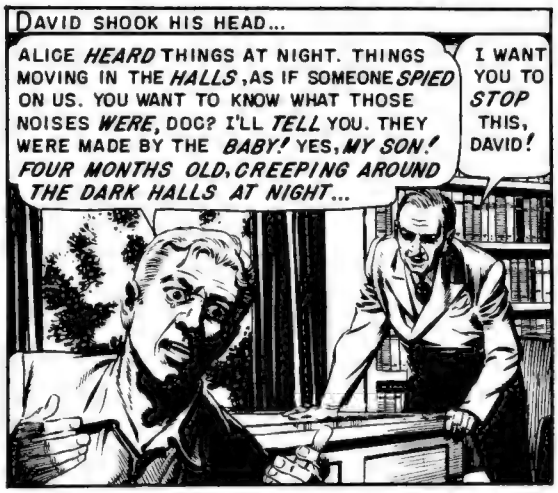
HE MUST HAVE MADE A PHONE CALL. HE DIDN'T REMEMBER. HE FOUND HIMSELF SUDDENLY UPSTAIRS, STARING AT THE CRIB. THE BABY'S EYES WERE CLOSED, BUT HIS FACE WAS RED, MOIST WITH PERSPIRATION...

THEN HE STARTED LAUGHING, LOW AND SOFT AND CONTINUOUS FOR A LONG TIME, UNTIL DR. JEFFERS WALKED OUT OF THE NIGHT-TIME AND SLAPPED HIM AGAIN AND AGAIN ACROSS HIS CHEEKS...

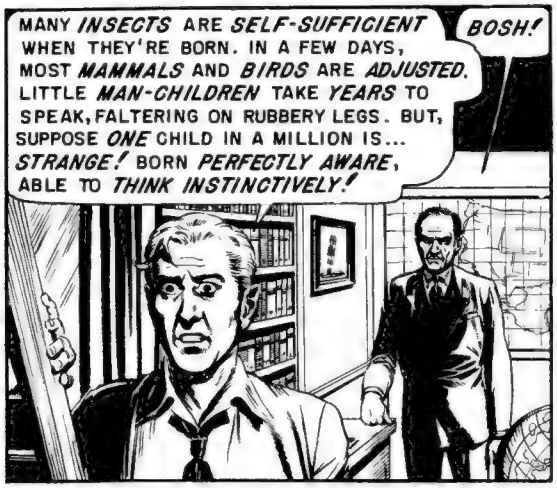
IT WAS ELEVEN AT NIGHT. A LOT OF STRANGE PEOPLE HAD COME AND GONE THROUGH THE HOUSE, TAKING THE ESSENTIAL FLAME WITH THEM... ALICE. DAVID SAT ACROSS FROM THE DOCTOR IN THE LIBRARY...

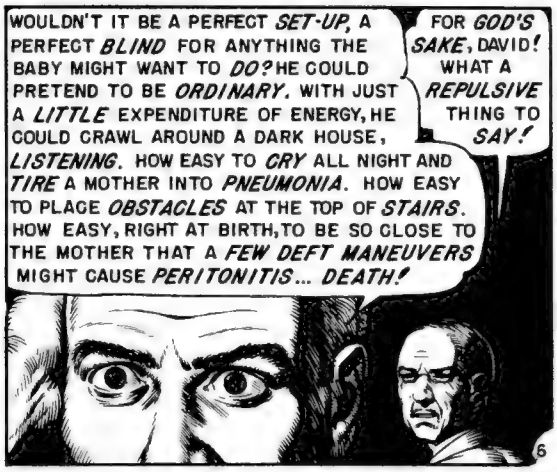
ALICE WASN'T *CRAZY*, DOC. SHE HAD *GOOD REASON* TO FEAR THE BABY.
NOW *YOU'RE* FOLLOWING *HER* PATTERN. *SHE* BLAMED THE CHILD FOR HER SICKNESS, NOW *YOU* BLAME IT FOR HER *DEATH*. SHE STUMBLED ON A *TOY*, REMEMBER THAT! YOU *CAN'T* BLAME THE *CHILD!*

DAVID SHOOK HIS HEAD...


ALICE *HEARD* THINGS AT NIGHT. THINGS MOVING IN THE *HALLS*, AS IF SOMEONE *SPIED* ON US. YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT THOSE NOISES *WERE*, DOC? I'LL *TELL* YOU. THEY WERE MADE BY THE *BABY!* YES, *MY SON! FOUR MONTHS OLD, CREEPING AROUND THE DARK HALLS AT NIGHT...*
I WANT YOU TO *STOP* THIS, DAVID!

WHAT DO WE *KNOW* OF BABIES, DOCTOR? THE *GENERAL* KNOWLEDGE, *YES*. YOU KNOW OF COURSE, HOW BABIES *KILL* THEIR MOTHERS AT BIRTH. *WHY?* IN *RESENTMENT* AT BEING *FORCED INTO THIS LOUSY WORLD!* BEING FORCED TO *VACATE* FROM THE *PEACE* AND *SAFETY* OF ITS...
DAVID! YOU'RE ALL WRONG! I...


MANY *INSECTS* ARE *SELF-SUFFICIENT* WHEN THEY'RE BORN. IN A FEW DAYS, MOST *MAMMALS* AND *BIRDS* ARE *ADJUSTED*. LITTLE *MAN-CHILDREN* TAKE *YEARS* TO SPEAK, FALTERING ON RUBBERY LEGS. BUT, SUPPOSE *ONE* CHILD IN A MILLION IS... *STRANGE!* BORN *PERFECTLY AWARE*, ABLE TO *THINK INSTINCTIVELY!*
BOSH!


WOULDN'T IT BE A PERFECT *SET-UP*, A PERFECT *BLIND* FOR ANYTHING THE BABY MIGHT WANT TO *DO?* HE COULD PRETEND TO BE *ORDINARY*, WITH JUST A *LITTLE* EXPENDITURE OF ENERGY, HE COULD CRAWL AROUND A DARK HOUSE, *LISTENING*. HOW EASY TO *CRY* ALL NIGHT AND *TIRE* A MOTHER INTO *PNEUMONIA*. HOW EASY TO PLACE *OBSTACLES* AT THE TOP OF *STAIRS*. HOW EASY, RIGHT AT BIRTH, TO BE SO CLOSE TO THE MOTHER THAT A *FEW DEFT MANEUVERS* MIGHT CAUSE *PERITONITIS... DEATH!*
FOR *GOD'S SAKE*, DAVID! WHAT A *REPULSIVE* THING TO *SAY!*
6

MY LITTLE BOY BABY, LYING IN HIS CRIB NIGHTS, HIS FACE MOIST AND RED AND OUT OF BREATH. FROM *CRYING? NO!* FROM CLIMBING TEDIOUSLY, ACHINGLY SLOW, OUT OF HIS *CRIB*. FROM CRAWLING LONG DISTANCES THROUGH DARKENED *HALLWAYS*. MY LITTLE BOY BABY. I WANT TO *KILL* HIM...SOB...

YOU'RE NOT KILLING *ANYONE!* YOU'RE GOING TO *SLEEP* FOR TWENTY-FOUR HOURS. SLEEP WILL *CHANGE YOUR MIND. HERE.* TAKE THESE *PILLS*...

DAVID DRANK DOWN THE PILLS AND LET HIMSELF BE LED UPSTAIRS TO HIS BEDROOM, CRYING, AND FELT HIMSELF BEING PUT TO BED. THE DOCTOR SAID GOOD-NIGHT AND LEFT THE HOUSE. DAVID, ALONE, DRIFTED TOWARD SLEEP. A NOISE...

WHA...WHAT'S *THAT*...

SOMETHING MOVED IN THE HALL! DAVID SLEPT...

THE NEXT MORNING, DOCTOR JEFFERS RETURNED AND LET HIMSELF IN. SOMEONE WAS GOING TO HAVE TO LOOK AFTER THE BABY. THERE WAS AN ODOR OF GAS IN THE HOUSE. JEFFERS RAN UP THE STAIRS, CRASHED INTO DAVID'S ROOM...

COUGH...COUGH...

DAVID LAY ON THE BED, NOT MOVING. THE ROOM BILLOWED WITH GAS WHICH HISSED FROM AN UNLIT HEATER ON THE FLOOR NEAR THE DOOR...

DAVID WAS DEAD. THE BODY WAS COLD. IT HAD ONLY BEEN DEAD A FEW HOURS...

HE...COUGH...HE *COULDN'T* HAVE TURNED THE GAS ON *HIMSELF!* THOSE *SEDATIVES* HAD KNOCKED HIM *OUT!* HE WOULDN'T HAVE *WAKENED* TILL *NOON!* BUT... BUT...

DR. JEFFERS WALKED TO THE NURSERY. THE DOOR WAS *CLOSED*. HE OPENED IT AND WALKED INSIDE AND OVER TO THE CRIB. THE CRIB WAS *EMPTY*...

THE NURSERY DOOR BLEW *SHUT*. YOU COULDN'T GET *BACK* TO YOUR CRIB. YOU DIDN'T PLAN ON THE *DOOR* BLOWING SHUT.

HE OPENED HIS MEDICAL BAG...

A LITTLE THING LIKE A *SLAMMED DOOR* CAN RUIN THE *BEST* OF PLANS. WELL, I'LL *FIND* YOU SOMEWHERE IN THE HOUSE, HIDING...PRETENDING TO BE *SOMETHING* YOU ARE *NOT!*

SOMETHING RUSTLED DOWN THE HALL. SOMETHING SMALL AND VERY QUIET. JEFFERS CAME OUT OF THE NURSERY...

I HAD TO OPERATE TO BRING YOU *INTO* THIS WORLD. NOW I GUESS I CAN OPERATE TO TAKE YOU *OUT* OF... *SEE, BABY?* SOMETHING *BRIGHT!* SOMETHING *SHINY!*

A SCALPEL...

-THE END-

7

THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE! YEP, IT'S YOUR *DIETITIAN* OF *DISGUSTING DRAMA, THE OLD WITCH,* READY TO *STIR UP* ANOTHER *STENCH SNACK* IN MY *CAULDRON* HERE IN *THE HAUNT OF FEAR.* SO *COME IN,* KIDDIES, AND SIT DOWN BY THE *FIRE. THIS* TIME, MY *MENU* CONSISTS OF ANOTHER ADAPTATION OF A TALE BY *MY BOY, BRADBURY... REVOLTING RAY,* AS I AFFECTIONATELY CALL HIM. LISTEN TO *RAY BRADBURY'S* SUPERB...

THE HANDLER

MR. BENEDICT WALKED DOWN THE STEPS AND OUT THE GATE, WITHOUT ONCE LOOKING AT HIS LITTLE MORTUARY BUILDING. HE SAVED THAT PLEASURE FOR LATER. IT WAS VERY IMPORTANT THAT THINGS TOOK THE RIGHT PRECEDENCE. IT WOULDN'T PAY TO THINK WITH JOY OF THE BODIES AWAITING HIS TALENTS IN THE MORTUARY BUILDING. NO, IT WAS BETTER TO FOLLOW HIS USUAL DAY-AFTER-DAY ROUTINE. HE WOULD LET THE CONFLICT BEGIN...

MR. BENEDICT KNEW JUST WHERE TO GET HIMSELF ENRAGED. HE SPOKE WITH MR. RODGERS, THE DRUGGIST. AND HE SAVED AND PUT AWAY ALL THE SLURS AND INTONATIONS AND INSULTS...

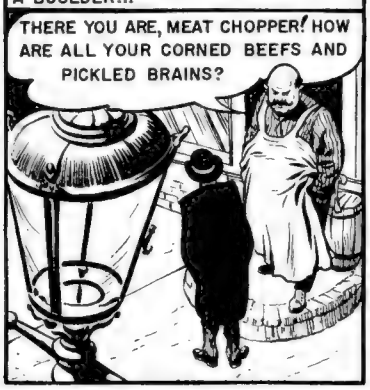
MR. RODGERS ALWAYS HAD SOME TERRIBLE THING TO SAY ABOUT A MAN IN THE FUNERAL PROFESSION. AND OUTSIDE THE DRUG STORE, MR. BENEDICT MET UP WITH MR. STUYVESANT, THE CONTRACTOR...

OH, HELLO, BENEDICT. HOW'S *BUSINESS*? I'LL BET YOU'RE GOING AT IT *TOOTH AND NAIL*. DID YOU *GET* IT? I SAID *TOOTH* AND...
YES, YES! AND HOW'S *YOUR* BUSINESS, MR. STUYVESANT?

AND ON IT WENT, PERSON AFTER PERSON...

SAY, HOW DO YOUR HANDS GET SO *COLD*, BENEDICT, OLD MAN? THAT'S A *COLD SHAKE* YOU GOT THERE. YOU JUST GET DONE EMBALMING A *FRIGID WOMAN*? HEH, THAT'S *NOT BAD*. YOU HEARD WHAT I *SAID*?
GOOD, GOOD! WELL...GOOD DAY!

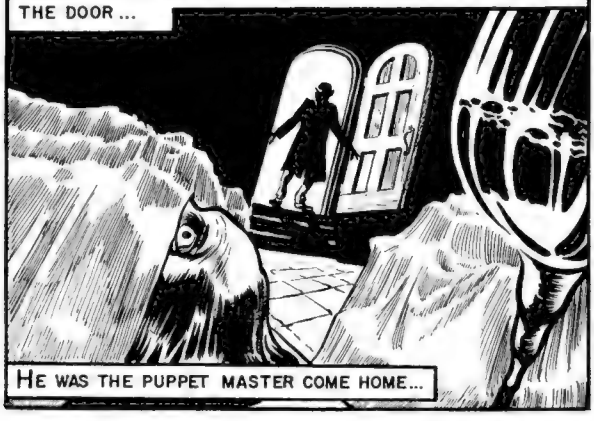
MR. BENEDICT WAS THE LAKE INTO WHICH ALL REFUSE WAS THROWN. PEOPLE BEGAN WITH PEBBLES, AND WHEN MR. BENEDICT DID NOT RIPPLE, THEY HEAVED A STONE... A BRICK... A BOULDER...



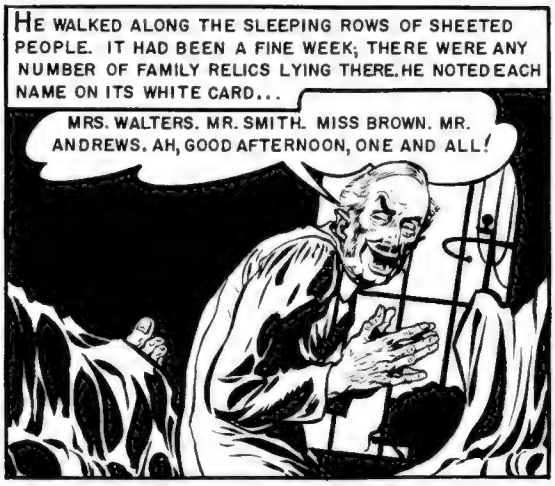
THAT WAS MR. FLINGER, THE DELICATESSEN MAN. THERE WERE MORE, MANY MORE. THINGS WORKED TO A CRESCENDO. FINALLY, MR. BENEDICT TURNED WILDLY AND RAN BACK THROUGH TOWN. HE WAS ALL READY NOW...

THE AWFUL PART OF THE DAY WAS OVER... THE GOOD PART WAS NOW TO BEGIN! HE RAN EAGERLY UP THE STEPS OF HIS MORTUARY...

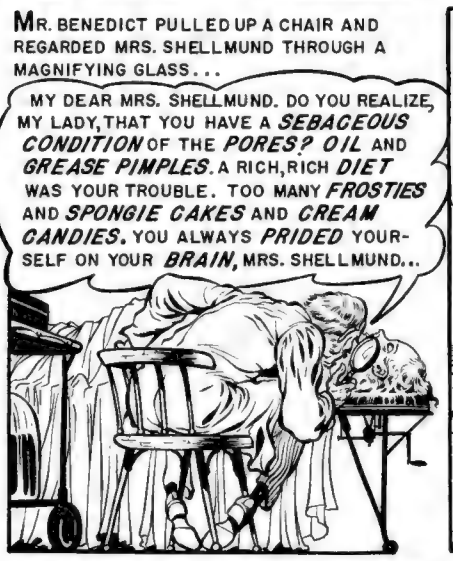
THE ROOM WAITED LIKE A FALL OF SNOW. THERE WERE WHITE HUMMOCKS AND PALE DELINEATIONS OF THINGS RECUMBENT UNDER SHEETS IN THE DIMNESS. MR. BENEDICT FLUNG OPEN THE DOOR...



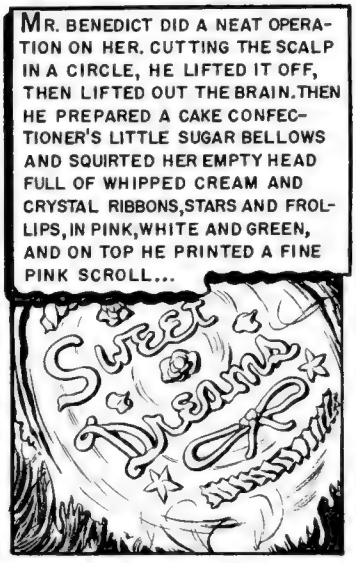
HE STOOD FOR A LONG MINUTE IN THE VERY CENTER OF HIS THEATER. IN HIS HEAD, APPLAUSE, PERHAPS, THUNDERED. THEN HE CAREFULLY REMOVED HIS COAT, GOT INTO A FRESH WHITE SMOCK, AND RUBBED HIS HANDS TOGETHER AS HE LOOKED AT HIS VERY GOOD FRIENDS...

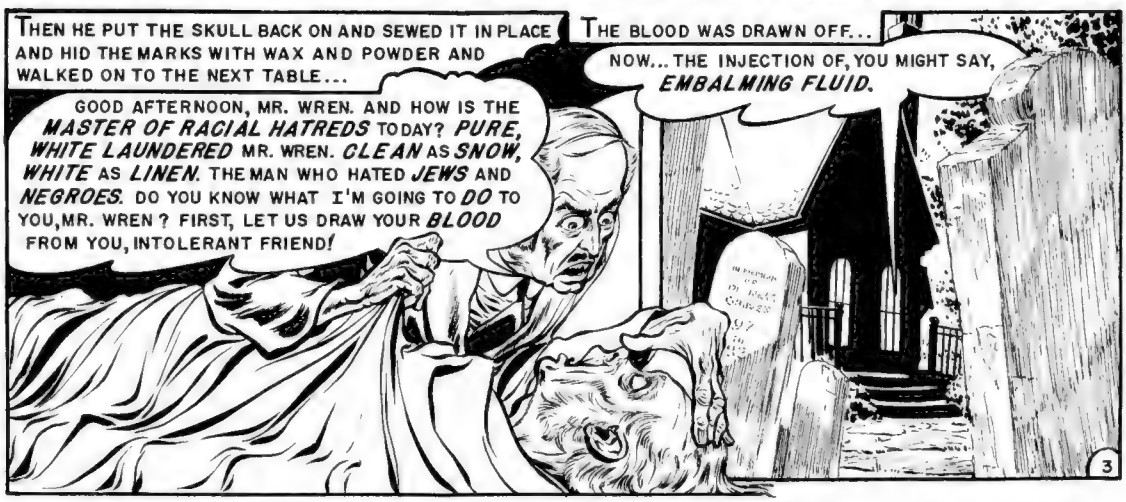

HE WALKED ALONG THE SLEEPING ROWS OF SHEETED PEOPLE. IT HAD BEEN A FINE WEEK; THERE WERE ANY NUMBER OF FAMILY RELICS LYING THERE. HE NOTED EACH NAME ON ITS WHITE CARD...
MRS. WALTERS. MR. SMITH. MISS BROWN. MR. ANDREWS. AH, GOOD AFTERNOON, ONE AND ALL!

MR. BENEDICT LIFTED A SHEET AS IF LOOKING FOR A CHILD UNDER A BED...
HOW ARE YOU TODAY, MRS. SHELLMUND? YOU'RE LOOKING SPLENDID, DEAR LADY!


MR. BENEDICT PULLED UP A CHAIR AND REGARDED MRS. SHELLMUND THROUGH A MAGNIFYING GLASS...
MY DEAR MRS. SHELLMUND. DO YOU REALIZE, MY LADY, THAT YOU HAVE A SEBACEOUS CONDITION OF THE PORES? OIL AND GREASE PIMPLES. A RICH, RICH DIET WAS YOUR TROUBLE. TOO MANY FROSTIES AND SPONGIE CAKES AND CREAM CANDIES. YOU ALWAYS PRIDED YOURSELF ON YOUR BRAIN, MRS. SHELLMUND...

BUT YOU KEPT THAT WONDERFUL PRICELESS BRAIN OF YOURS AFLOAT IN PARFAITS AND FIZZES AND LIMEADES AND SODAS AND WERE SO VERY SUPERIOR TO ME THAT NOW, MRS. SHELLMUND, HERE IS WHAT SHALL HAPPEN...


MR. BENEDICT DID A NEAT OPERATION ON HER. CUTTING THE SCALP IN A CIRCLE, HE LIFTED IT OFF, THEN LIFTED OUT THE BRAIN. THEN HE PREPARED A CAKE CONFECTIONER'S LITTLE SUGAR BELLOWS AND SQUIRTED HER EMPTY HEAD FULL OF WHIPPED CREAM AND CRYSTAL RIBBONS, STARS AND FROLLIPS, IN PINK, WHITE AND GREEN, AND ON TOP HE PRINTED A FINE PINK SCROLL...
Sweet Dreams


THEN HE PUT THE SKULL BACK ON AND SEWED IT IN PLACE AND HID THE MARKS WITH WAX AND POWDER AND WALKED ON TO THE NEXT TABLE...
GOOD AFTERNOON, MR. WREN. AND HOW IS THE MASTER OF RACIAL HATREDS TODAY? PURE, WHITE LAUNDERED MR. WREN. CLEAN AS SNOW, WHITE AS LINEN. THE MAN WHO HATED JEWS AND NEGROES. DO YOU KNOW WHAT I'M GOING TO DO TO YOU, MR. WREN? FIRST, LET US DRAW YOUR BLOOD FROM YOU, INTOLERANT FRIEND!
THE BLOOD WAS DRAWN OFF...
NOW... THE INJECTION OF, YOU MIGHT SAY, EMBALMING FLUID.
3

MR. WREN, SNOW-WHITE, LINEN PURE, LAY WITH THE FLUID GOING IN HIM. MR. BENEDICT LAUGHED. MR. WREN TURNED BLACK... *BLACK* AS *DIRT*... *BLACK* AS *NIGHT*...

THE EMBALMING FLUID WAS... *INK!*

MR. BENEDICT MOVED ON...

AND HELLO TO YOU, EDMUND WORTH. WHAT A HANDSOME BODY YOU HAD. POWERFUL, WITH MUSCLES PINNED FROM HUGE BONE TO HUGE BONE, AND A CHEST LIKE A BOULDER. WOMEN GREW SPEECHLESS WHEN YOU WALKED BY...MEN STARED WITH ENVY! AND NOW, HERE YOU ARE...

MR. BENEDICT SEVERED WORTH'S HEAD, PUT IT IN A COFFIN ON A SMALL PILLOW, FACING UP, THEN HE PLACED ONE HUNDRED NINETY POUNDS OF BRICKS IN THE COFFIN AND ARRANGED THEM TO LOOK LIKE A BODY. IT WAS A FINE ILLUSION...

SINCE IT WAS A GROWING AND POPULAR HABIT IN THE TOWN FOR PEOPLE TO BE BURIED WITH THE COFFIN LIDS CLOSED OVER THEM DURING THE SERVICE, THIS GAVE MR. BENEDICT GREAT OPPORTUNITIES TO VENT HIS REPRESSIONS ON HIS HAPLESS GUESTS. HE HAD THE MOST UTTERLY WONDROUS FUN WITH A GROUP OF OLD MAIDEN LADIES WHO WERE MASHED IN AN AUTO ON THEIR WAY TO AN AFTERNOON TEA. THEY WERE FAMOUS GOSSIPS, ALWAYS WITH HEADS TOGETHER OVER SOME CHOICE BIT. AS IN LIFE, ALL THREE WERE CROWDED INTO ONE CASKET, HEADS TOGETHER IN ETERNAL COLD PETRIFIED GOSSIP...

THE OTHER TWO CASKETS WERE FILLED WITH PEBBLES AND SHELLS AND RAVELS OF GINGHAM. IT WAS A NICE SERVICE. EVERYBODY CRIED...

THOSE THREE INSEPARABLES, AT LAST SEPARATED!

HEH, HEH...

NOT LACKING FOR A SENSE OF JUSTICE, MR. BENEDICT BURIED ONE RICH MAN STARK NAKED...

A POOR MAN HE BURIED WOUND IN GOLD CLOTH, WITH FIVE-DOLLAR GOLD PIECES FOR BUTTONS AND TWENTY-DOLLAR GOLD COINS ON EACH EYELID...

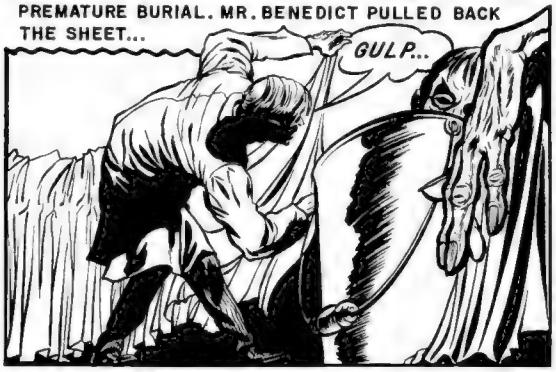
4

A LAWYER HE DID NOT BURY AT ALL, BUT BURNT HIM IN THE INCINERATOR...

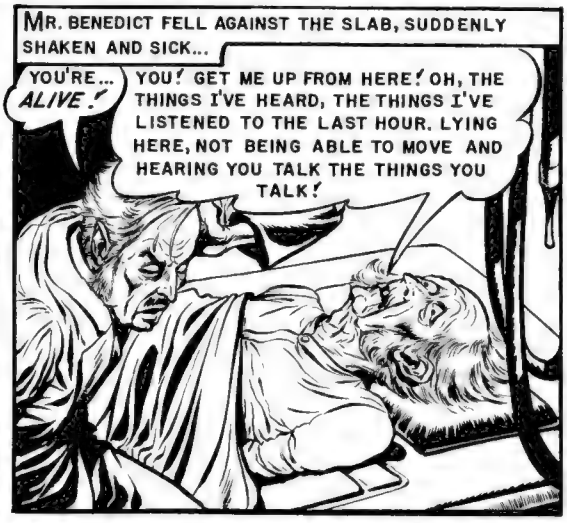
HIS COFFIN CONTAINED NOTHING BUT A POLE-CAT, TRAPPED IN THE WOODS ONE SUNDAY...

AN OLD MAID WAS THE VICTIM OF A TERRIBLE DEVICE. UNDER THE SILKEN COMFORTER, PARTS OF AN OLD MAN HAD BEEN BURIED WITH HER. THERE SHE LAY BEING MADE COLD LOVE TO BY HIDDEN HANDS AND THINGS. THE SHOCK SHOWED ON HER FACE, SOMEWHAT...

SO MR. BENEDICT MOVED FROM BODY TO BODY IN HIS MORTUARY. THE FINAL BODY OF THE DAY WAS THE BODY OF ONE MERRIWELL BLYTHE, AN ANCIENT MAN AFFLICTED WITH SPELLS AND COMAS. MR. BLYTHE HAD BEEN BROUGHT IN FOR DEAD SEVERAL TIMES, BUT EACH TIME HE HAD REVIVED IN TIME TO PREVENT PREMATURE BURIAL. MR. BENEDICT PULLED BACK THE SHEET...



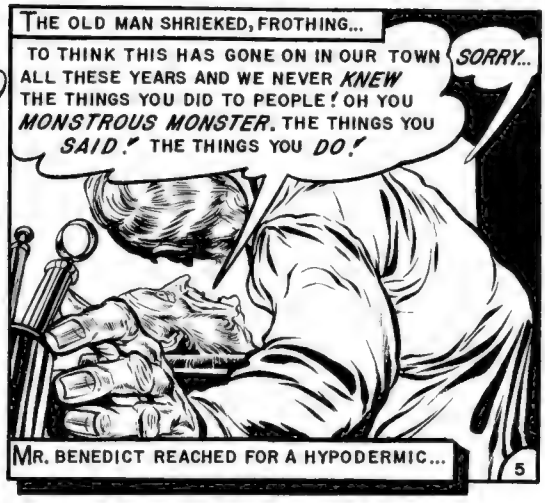
MR. BENEDICT FELL AGAINST THE SLAB, SUDDENLY SHAKEN AND SICK...


YOU'RE... ALIVE!
YOU! GET ME UP FROM HERE! OH, THE THINGS I'VE HEARD, THE THINGS I'VE LISTENED TO THE LAST HOUR. LYING HERE, NOT BEING ABLE TO MOVE AND HEARING YOU TALK THE THINGS YOU TALK!

THE OLD MAN ON THE SLAB WAILED, ROLLING HIS EYES ABOUT IN HIS HEAD IN WHITE ORBITS...

OH, YOU DARK DARK THING, YOU AWFUL THING, YOU FIEND, YOU MONSTER, GET ME UP FROM HERE! I'LL TELL THE MAYOR AND THE COUNCIL AND EVERYONE, OH, YOU DARK DARK THING! YOU DEFILER AND SADIST, YOU PERVERTED SCOUNDREL, YOU TERRIBLE MAN...
NO...

THE OLD MAN SHRIEKED, FROTHING...

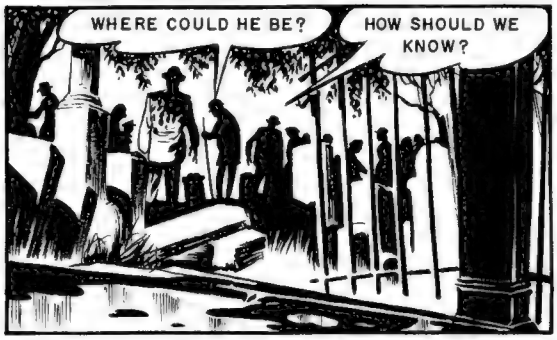

TO THINK THIS HAS GONE ON IN OUR TOWN ALL THESE YEARS AND WE NEVER KNEW THE THINGS YOU DID TO PEOPLE! OH YOU MONSTROUS MONSTER. THE THINGS YOU SAID! THE THINGS YOU DO!
SORRY...

MR. BENEDICT REACHED FOR A HYPODERMIC...

5

MR. BENEDICT STABBED MR. BLYTHE IN THE ARM WITH THE NEEDLE. THE OLD MAN CRIED WILDLY TO ALL THE SHEETED FIGURES...
YOU! HELP ME! YOU OUT THERE, UNDER THE STONES, HELP ME! LISTEN!
THE OLD MAN FELL BACK. HE KNEW HE WAS DYING...
ALL, LISTEN! HE'S DONE THIS TO ME, AND YOU, AND YOU, ALL OF YOU. HE'S DONE TOO MUCH, TOO LONG. DON'T TAKE IT! DON'T, DON'T LET HIM DO ANY MORE TO ANYONE!
MR. BENEDICT STOOD THERE...
THEY CAN'T DO ANYTHING TO ME. AND NEITHER CAN YOU!
OUT OF YOUR GRAVES. HELP ME! TONIGHT, OR TOMORROW, OR SOON. BUT COME AND FIX HIM... THIS HORRIBLE MAN!
THE OLD MAN RAVED ON AND ON, GETTING WEAKER. THE ROOM WAS SUDDENLY VERY DARK. IT WAS NIGHT. IT WAS GETTING LATE. FINALLY, SMILING, THE OLD MAN WHISPERED...
THEY'VE TAKEN A LOT FROM YOU, HORRIBLE MAN. TONIGHT, THEY'LL... DO... SOMETHING...
... AND THEN, THE OLD MAN DIED ...
PEOPLE SAY THERE WAS AN EXPLOSION THAT NIGHT... IN THE GRAVEYARD. OR RATHER A SERIES OF EXPLOSIONS, A SMELL OF STRANGE THINGS, A MOVEMENT, A VIOLENCE, A RAVING. STONES TOPPLED AND THINGS SWORE OATHS...
... AND THERE WAS A CHASING AND A SCREAMING, AND MANY SHADOWS... MOVING INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE MORTUARY BUILDING IN SWIFT JERKS AND SHAMBLINGS. WINDOWS BROKE. DOORS WERE TORN FROM HINGES, LEAVES FROM TREES. IRON GATES CLATTERED...
... AND IN THE END, THERE WAS MR. BENEDICT RUNNING ABOUT, RUNNING ABOUT, VANISHING, AND A TORTURED SCREAM THAT COULD ONLY BE MR. BENEDICT HIMSELF...
AFTER THAT... NOTHING. QUIET...
6

THE TOWN PEOPLE ENTERED THE MORTUARY THE NEXT MORNING. THEY SEARCHED THE MORTUARY BUILDING AND THEN WENT OUT INTO THE GRAVEYARD. AND THEY FOUND NOTHING BUT BLOOD, A VAST QUANTITY OF BLOOD, SPRINKLED AND THROWN AND SPREAD EVERYWHERE YOU COULD POSSIBLY LOOK, AS IF THE HEAVENS HAD BLED PROFUSELY IN THE NIGHT...



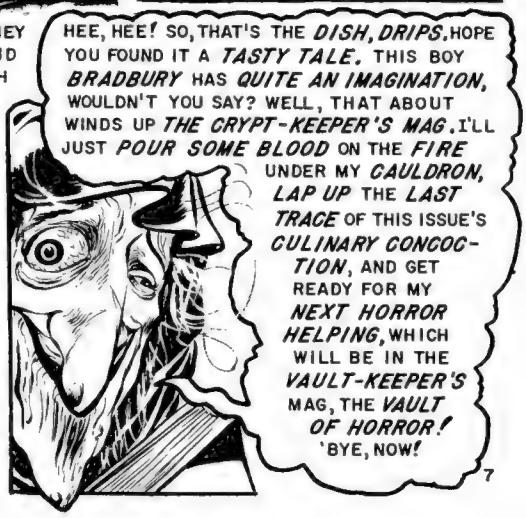
WALKING THROUGH THE GRAVEYARD, THEY STOOD IN DEEP TREE SHADOWS WHERE STONES, ROW ON ROW, WERE OLD AND TIME-ERASED AND LEANING. NO BIRDS SANG. THEY STOPPED BY ONE TOMBSTONE...

FRESHLY SCRATCHED, AS IF BY FEEBLY, FRANTIC, HASTY FINGERS IN THE GREYISH, MOSS-FLECKED STONE WAS THE NAME: *MR. BENEDICT*...

A VILLAGER POINTED TO THE OTHER GRAVESTONES. UPON EACH AND EVERY STONE, SCRATCHED BY FINGERNAIL SCRATCHINGS, THE SAME MESSAGE APPEARED: *MR. BENEDICT.*

THE TOWN PEOPLE WERE STUNNED...

THEY STOOD THERE FOR ONE LONG MOMENT. INSTINCTIVELY THEY ALL LOOKED AT ONE ANOTHER NERVOUSLY IN THE SILENCE AND THE TREE DARKNESS. THEY ALL WAITED FOR AN ANSWER. WITH FUMBLING SENSELESS LIPS, ONE OF THEM REPLIED, SIMPLY...


HEE, HEE! SO, THAT'S THE *DISH, DRIPS*, HOPE YOU FOUND IT A *TASTY TALE*. THIS BOY *BRADBURY* HAS *QUITE AN IMAGINATION*, WOULDN'T YOU SAY? WELL, THAT ABOUT WINDS UP *THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S MAG*. I'LL JUST *POUR SOME BLOOD* ON THE *FIRE* UNDER MY *CAULDRON*, *LAP UP* THE *LAST TRACE* OF THIS ISSUE'S *CULINARY CONCOCTION*, AND GET READY FOR MY *NEXT HORROR HELPING*, WHICH WILL BE IN THE *VAULT-KEEPER'S* MAG, THE *VAULT OF HORROR!* 'BYE, NOW!
7

THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH! YEP, IT'S YOUR *CRYPT-KEEPER* AGAIN, FIENDS...WELCOMING YOU ONCE MORE TO *THE CRYPT OF TERROR!* FOR MY SPOT IN THE *OLD WITCH'S SLIME SHEET*, I'M GOING TO TELL YOU A *YELP-YARN* ADAPTED FROM A *STORY BY ONE OF AMERICA'S TOP FANTASY WRITERS... RAY BRADBURY!* *MR. BRADBURY* ORIGINALLY CALLED THIS YARN *'THE COFFIN'!* I, BEING A *CLEVER* TALE-TELLER *MYSELF*, CALL IT....

THE COFFIN!

RICHARD BRALING HAD LISTENED WITH INCREASING DIFFICULTY AND MUCH CURIOSITY FOR A NUMBER OF DAYS TO THE BANGING AND RATTLING ABOUT IN HIS ELDER BROTHER'S WORKSHOP! FINALLY, HE COULD STAND IT NO LONGER...

CHARLES BRALING WAS A DYING MAN... A BADLY DYING MAN! HE SEEMED TO BE IN A GREAT HURRY, BETWEEN RACKING COUGHS AND SPITTLINGS, TO PIECE TOGETHER ONE LAST INVENTION...
PLEASE, CHARLES! TELL ME...
IF YOU MUST KNOW... I'LL BE DEAD IN ANOTHER WEEK AND I'M... I'M BUILDING A COFFIN!
A COFFIN, MY DEAR CHARLIE! THAT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE A COFFIN! A COFFIN ISN'T THAT COMPLEX! COME ON, NOW! WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?
I TELL YOU, IT'S A COFFIN! AN ODD COFFIN, YES, BUT NEVERTHELESS... A COFFIN!
BUT IT WOULD BE EASIER TO BUY ONE!
NOT ONE LIKE THIS! YOU COULDN'T BUY ONE LIKE THIS... ANY PLACE... EVER! OH, IT'LL BE A REAL FINE COFFIN ALL RIGHT!
CHARLES FITTED AN ODD THINGUMABOB ON THE BOX BEFORE HIM! RICHARD MOVED FORWARD...
YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY LYING! WHY, THAT COFFIN IS A GOOD TWELVE FEET LONG! SIX FEET LONGER THAN NORMAL SIZE!
YEP!
AND THAT TRANSPARENT TOP! WHO EVER HEARD OF A COFFIN LID YOU CAN SEE THROUGH? WHAT GOOD IS A TRANSPARENT LID TO A CORPSE?
OH, JUST NEVER YOU MIND AT ALL! TUM-TA-TUM... DA-DEE.
THE OLD MAN WENT HUMMING AND HAMMERING ABOUT THE SHOP! RICHARD HAD TO SHOUT ABOVE THE DIN...
THIS COFFIN IS TERRIBLY THICK! WHY IT MUST BE FIVE FEET THICK! HOW UTTERLY UNNECESSARY!
I ONLY WISH I MIGHT LIVE TO PATENT THIS AMAZING COFFIN! IT WOULD BE A GOD-SEND TO ALL THE POOR PEOPLES OF THE WORLD! THINK HOW IT WOULD ELIMINATE THE EXPENSES OF FUNERALS...
OH, BUT, OF COURSE, YOU DON'T KNOW HOW IT WOULD DO THAT, DO YOU? HOW SILLY OF ME! WELL I SHAN'T TELL YOU! IF THIS COFFIN COULD BE MASS-PRODUCED, GAD, WHAT MONEY PEOPLE WOULD SAVE!
OH, GO TO BLAZES!
2

RICHARD STORMED OUT OF HIS ELDER BROTHER'S SHOP! POOR RICHARD! YES, IT HAD BEEN AN UNPLEASANT LIFE! YOUNG RICHARD HAD ALWAYS BEEN SUCH A BOUNDER, HE'D NEVER HAD TWO COINS TO CLINK TOGETHER AT ONE TIME! ALL OF HIS MONEY HAD COME FROM OLD BROTHER CHARLIE, WHO HAD THE INDECENCY TO REMIND HIM OF IT ALL THE TIME...

SELFISH OLD TIGHTWAD! WELL, THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN *WAITING* FOR, CHARLES... FOR *YOU TO DIE!* GO *AHEAD*, YOU OLD FOOL! *HAMMER* YOUR *LIFE AWAY!*

RICHARD SPENT MANY HOURS WITH HIS HOBBY! HE DEARLY LOVED PILING UP EMPTY BOTTLES WITH FRENCH WINE LABELS IN THE GARDEN! AS RICHARD OFTEN SAID WHILE SITTING AND SIPPING, SIPPING AND SITTING...

I LIKE TH' WAY THEY *GLINT*...HIC!

ONE MORNING, THE OLD BROTHER TODDLED UPSTAIRS AND STOLE THE INSIDES OUT OF THE ELECTRIC PHONOGRAPH...

ANOTHER MORNING, HE RAIDED THE GARDENER'S GREENHOUSE...

STILL ANOTHER TIME, CHARLES REGEIVED A DELIVERY FROM A MEDICAL COMPANY...

SIGN HERE, PLEASE!

YES...COUGH.. THANK YOU!

RICHARD WAS NEVER ALLOWED TO BUY ANYTHING FOR HIMSELF! IT WAS ALWAYS BOUGHT FOR HIM...GIVEN TO HIM! HE HAD TO ASK FOR EVERYTHING, EVEN WRITING PAPER! RICHARD CONSIDERED HIMSELF QUITE A MARTYR TO HAVE PUT UP WITH TAKING THINGS FROM THAT RICKETY OLD BROTHER FOR SO LONG! SO, NOW, WHILE THE HAMMERING AND THE MURMURING EXCURSIONS WENT ON, RICHARD JUST SAT...AND WAITED...

FINALLY, ON THE FOURTEENTH MORNING, OLD CHARLIE ANNOUNCED...

I'M FINISHED!

...AND DROPPED DEAD!

RICHARD...WITHOUT SHOWING HIS INNER EXCITEMENT...AROSE, WENT TO THE WINDOW, WATCHED THE SUNLIGHT PLAYFULLY GLITTERING AMONG THE EMPTY FAT BEETLE-LIKE CHAMPAGNE BOTTLES, THEN PICKED UP THE PHONE AND PERFUNCTORILY DIALED A NUMBER...

HELLO! *GREEN LAWN MORTUARY?*

HE LOOKED TO THE STAIRS WHERE DEAR OLD BROTHER CHARLIE LAY PEACEFULLY SPRAWLED AGAINST THE BANNISTER...

THIS IS THE *BRALING* RESIDENCE! WILL YOU SEND AROUND A *WICKER*, PLEASE? YES! FOR *BROTHER CHARLIE!* YES! THANK YOU!

LATER, AS THE MORTUARY PEOPLE WERE TAKING BROTHER CHARLIE OUT IN THEIR WICKER, THEY RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS...

AN *ORDINARY CASKET! NO FUNERAL SERVICE!* PUT HIM IN A *PINE COFFIN!* HE WOULD HAVE *PREFERRED* IT THAT WAY... *SIMPLE!* GOOD-BYE!

AFTER THEY LEFT, RICHARD RUBBED HIS HANDS TOGETHER...

NOW! WE SHALL *SEE* ABOUT THIS 'COFFIN' BUILT BY DEAR CHARLIE! I DO NOT SUPPOSE HE WILL *REALIZE* HE IS *NOT* BEING BURIED IN HIS *'SPECIAL' BOX! HAH!*

RICHARD DARTED INTO THE SHOP! THE COFFIN SAT BEFORE THE WIDE-FLUNG FRENCH WINDOWS, THE LID SHUT, COMPLETE AND NEAT, ALL PUT TOGETHER LIKE THE FINE INNARDS OF A SWISS WATCH! IT WAS VAST, AND RESTED UPON A LONG TABLE WITH ROLLERS BENEATH FOR EASY MANEUVERING...

HMMPH!

THE COFFIN INTERIOR, AS RICHARD PEERED THROUGH THE TRANSPARENT LID, WAS *SIX FEET LONG...*

THERE MUST BE A GOOD *THREE FEET* OF *FALSE BODY* AT BOTH *HEAD* AND *FOOT* OF THE COFFIN, THEN! THREE FEET AT EACH END COVERED BY *SECRET PANELS* WHICH, WHEN I FIND THE WAY OF *OPENING THEM*, WILL *REVEAL...*

OF *COURSE! MONEY!* IT WOULD BE *JUST LIKE* OLD CHARLIE TO *SUCK HIS RICHES INTO HIS GRAVE* WITH HIMSELF, LEAVING ME WITH NOT A *CENT* TO BUY A *BOTTLE* WITH! THE OLD ⊙X?#!!

4

RICHARD RAISED THE TRANSPARENT LID AND FELT ABOUT, BUT FOUND NO HIDDEN BUTTONS! THERE WAS A SMALL SIGN, STUDIOUSLY INKED ON WHITE PAPER, THUMBTACKED TO THE SIDE OF THE SATIN-LINED BOX.

WHAT'S *THIS*? **'THE BRALING ECONOMY CASKET!**
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SIMPLE TO OPERATE!'
HMMPH!

RICHARD SNORTED THINLY! WHO DID CHARLIE THINK HE WAS FOOLING? THERE WAS MORE WRITING! HE READ ON...

'DIRECTIONS: SIMPLY PLACE BODY IN COFFIN!' WHAT A *FOOL THING* TO SAY! PUT BODY IN COFFIN! *NATURALLY!* HOW *ELSE* WOULD ONE GO ABOUT IT?

RICHARD PEERED INTENTLY, FINISHING OUT THE DIRECTIONS . . .

'SIMPLY PLACE BODY IN COFFIN... **AND MUSIC WILL START!'**
WHAT? IT *CAN'T* BE...! DON'T TELL ME ALL THIS WORK HAS BEEN FOR A...! WE'LL FIND OUT...!

THERE WOULD BE NO HARM IN LYING IN THE BOX... TESTING IT! RICHARD NOTICED SMALL VENTILATING HOLES IN THE SIDES! EVEN IF THE LID WERE CLOSED DOWN, THERE'D BE AIR! RICHARD HOISTED HIMSELF UP...

HMMPH! SIMPLY PLACE BODY IN COFFIN AND MUSIC WILL START! *REALLY!* HOW *NAIVE* OF OLD CHARLIE!

HE WAS LIKE A MAN GETTING INTO A BATH-TUB! HE FELT NAKED AND WATCHED OVER! HE PUT ONE SHINY SHOE INTO THE COFFIN, CROOKED HIS KNEES AND EASED HIMSELF IN! HE CROUCHED THERE, AS IF UNDECIDED ABOUT THE TEMPERATURE OF THE BATH-WATER...

HEH, HEH!

CHUCKLING SOFTLY, RICHARD LAY DOWN, PRETENDING TO HIMSELF THAT HE WAS DEAD...THAT PEOPLE WERE DROPPING TEARS ON HIM...THAT CANDLES WERE FUMING AND ILLUMINATING... AND THAT THE WORLD WAS STOPPED IN MID-STRIDE BECAUSE OF HIS PASSING! HE PUT ON A LONG PALE EXPRESSION AND SHUT HIS EYES... HOLDING BACK THE LAUGHTER IN HIMSELF BEHIND PRESSED, QUIVERING LIPS...

WHRRRRRR SPUNG

THE LID SLAMMED DOWN ON HIM! FROM OUTSIDE, IF ONE HAD JUST COME INTO THE ROOM, ONE WOULD HAVE IMAGINED A WILD MAN WAS KICKING, POUNDING, BLATHERING, AND SHRIEKING INSIDE A CLOSET...

YAAAAAAAAA

THEN SILENCE! RICHARD RELAXED! THE LID WAS LOCKED! THERE WAS NOTHING TO DO BUT WAIT FOR SOMEONE TO COME AND LET HIM OUT...

5

THE MUSIC BEGAN TO PLAY! IT SEEMED TO COME FROM SOMEWHERE WITHIN THE COFFIN! IT WAS GREEN MUSIC! ORGAN MUSIC, VERY SLOW AND MELANCHOLY, TYPICAL OF GOTHIC ARCHES AND LONG BLACK TAPERS! IT SMELLED OF EARTH AND WHISPERS! IT ECHOED BETWEEN STONE WALLS! IT WAS SO SAD THAT ONE ALMOST CRIED LISTENING TO IT! IT WAS MUSIC OF POTTED PLANTS AND CRIMSON AND BLUE STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS! IT WAS LATE SUN AT TWILIGHT AND A COLD WIND BLOWING! IT WAS A DAWN WITH ONLY FOG AND A FARAWAY FOGHORN MOANING...

CHARLIE! YOU *OLD FOOL!*

TEARS OF LAUGHTER WELLED UP IN RICHARD'S EYES...

YOU OLD *FOOL*, YOU! SO *THIS* IS YOUR *ODD COFFIN!* NOTHING MORE THAN A *COFFIN WHICH PLAYS ITS OWN DIRGE!* OH, MY SAINTED GRANDMOTHER!

RICHARD'S EYES ROVED AIMLESSLY ABOUT! HIS FINGERS TAPPED SOFT LITTLE RHYTHMS ON THE SATIN CUSHIONS! THROUGH THE TRANSPARENT LID HE SAW SUNLIGHT SHOOTING THROUGH THE OPEN FRENCH WINDOWS... DUST PARTICLES DANCING ON IT! IT WAS A LOVELY DAY! THE ORGAN MUSIC QUIETED! THE SERMON BEGAN...

WE ARE GATHERED TOGETHER, THOSE WHO LOVED AND THOSE WHO KNEW THE DECEASED...

...TO GIVE HIM OUR HOMAGE AND OUR DUE...

CHARLIE, BLESS YOU! THAT'S *YOUR* VOICE! A *MECHANICAL FUNERAL*, BY HEAVENS! *ORGAN MUSIC* AND *LECTURE!* AND *CHARLIE* GIVING HIS *OWN ORATION* FOR *HIMSELF!*

THE SOFT VOICE CONTINUED...

WE WHO KNEW AND LOVED HIM ARE GRIEVED AT THE PASSING OF *RICHARD BRALING!*

RICHARD! WHY, *I'M* RICHARD!

A SLIP OF THE TONGUE, NATURALLY! MERELY A SLIP! CHARLIE HAD MEANT TO SAY *'CHARLES'* BRALING! CERTAINLY! YES! OF COURSE! YES! CERTAINLY! YES! NATURALLY! YES...

RICHARD WAS A *FINE* MAN! WE SHALL SEE *NO FINER* IN *OUR TIME!*

MY... MY NAME *AGAIN!*

IT WAS *HARDLY* A MISTAKE, USING THAT NAME *TWICE!* RICHARD BRALING! RICHARD BRALING! *WHIRRR! SPUNG!* FLOWERS! *SIX DOZEN BRIGHT BLUE, RED, YELLOW, SUN-BRILLIANT FLOWERS LEAPED UP* FROM BEHIND THE COFFIN ON CONCEALED SPRINGS...

HELP!

IN LIFE, RICHARD BRALING WAS A CONNOISSEUR OF GREAT AND GOOD THINGS! HE SAVORED LIFE, AS ONE SAVORS OF A RARE WINE... HOLDING IT UPON THE LIPS...

6

A SMALL PANEL INSIDE THE BOX FLIPPED OPEN! A BRIGHT METAL ARM SNATCHED OUT! A NEEDLE STABBED RICHARD IN THE THORAX, SHOOTING HIM FULL OF COLORED LIQUID BEFORE HE COULD SEIZE IT...

EEEIGH

A GROWING NUMBNESS! SUDDENLY RICHARD COULD NOT MOVE HIS FINGERS... OR HIS ARMS... OR TURN HIS HEAD! HIS LEGS WERE COLD AND LIMP! ANOTHER PANEL OPENED! METAL FORCEPS ISSUED FORTH ON STEEL ARMS! HIS LEFT WRIST WAS PIERCED BY A HUGE SUCKING NEEDLE...

MMMPH-H-H-H!

THIS TIME HE DID NOT SCREAM! HIS TONGUE WAS MOTIONLESS IN HIS ANAESTHETIZED MOUTH... A PUMP STARTED TO WORK! WHILE HIS BLOOD DRAINED OUT ONE SIDE OF HIS BODY, HIS RIGHT WRIST WAS PUNCTURED, HELD, A NEEDLE SHOVED INTO IT, AND THE SECOND PUMP BEGAN TO FORCE FORMALDEHYDE INTO HIM...

PHSST PJOOM PHSST PJOOM

A SMALL MOTOR POPPED AND CHUGGED! THE ROOM DRIFTED BY ON EITHER SIDE OF HIM! LITTLE WHEELS REVOLVED! NO PALLBEARERS WERE NECESSARY! THE FLOWERS SWAYED AS THE CASKET ROLLED THROUGH THE FRENCH WINDOWS, INTO THE GARDEN...

NOW IT IS THE TIME WHEN WE MUST CONSIGN THIS PART OF THIS MAN TO THE *EARTH*...

CHUG CHUG

LITTLE SHINING SPADES LEAPED OUT OF THE SIDES OF THE CASKET! THEY BEGAN TO DIG! RICHARD SAW THE SPADES TOSS UP DIRT! THE COFFIN SETTLED... BUMPED... SETTLED... DUG... BUMPED AND SETTLED... DUG... BUMPED AND SETTLED...

ASHES TO ASHES... DUST TO DUST...

THE COFFIN WAS DEEP! THE MUSIC PLAYED! THE LAST THING RICHARD BRALING SAW WAS THE SPADING ARMS OF THE BRALING ECONOMY CASKET REACHING UP AND PULLING THE HOLE IN AFTER IT!

RICHARD BRALING... RICHARD BRALING... RICHARD BRALING...

THE RECORD WAS STUCK! NOBODY MINDED! NOBODY WAS LISTENING...

HEH, HEH! AND THAT'S THE STORY, KIDDIES... *RAY BRADBURY'S* STORY! *LIKE* THIS *BRADBURY*? *LET ME KNOW!* THERE'S *MORE* OF HIS TALES HERE IN THE CRYPT! HEH, HEH! YEP, *OLD CHARLIE* MADE THE COFFIN FOR *RICHARD*... *NOT* FOR *HIMSELF!* I GUESS HE *KNEW* HIS GOOD-FOR-NOTHING KID BROTHER *VERY WELL!* AND NOW, IT'S TIME TO *CLOSE* THE *OLD WITCH'S* MAG! WE'LL *ALL* SEE YOU NEXT IN *MY* MESS, *TALES FROM THE CRYPT!* 'BYE, NOW!

—THE END—

THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH! AND NOW IT'S *MY* TURN TO ENTERTAIN YOU! SO, COME IN! COME IN TO THE *CRYPT OF TERROR!* ONCE AGAIN, YOUR *CRYPT-KEEPER* HAS CHOSEN A STORY ADAPTED FROM A TALE BY THAT *MASTER* OF *HORROR* AND *FANTASY*, **RAY BRADBURY!** THIS *CHILLER* IS ONE OF MY *FAVORITES!* IT'S CALLED...

LET'S PLAY POISON!

MICHAEL SCREAMED. RECESS WAS OVER AND MR. HOWARD, THE TEACHER, WAS STILL ABSENT FROM THE FILLING ROOM. THE SIXTEEN BOYS AND GIRLS CROWDED ABOUT MICHAEL...

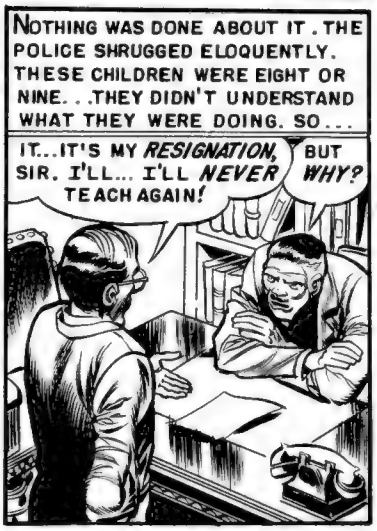
THE SIXTEEN BOYS AND GIRLS, BUMPING AND CLUSTERING AND BREATHING, RAISED A WINDOW. IT WAS THREE FLIGHTS DOWN TO THE SIDEWALK. MICHAEL FLAILED...

THEY TOOK HOLD OF MICHAEL AND PUSHED HIM OUT THE WINDOW. MR. HOWARD, THEIR TEACHER, CAME INTO THE ROOM...SHOUTING...

MICHAEL FELL THREE FLIGHTS...

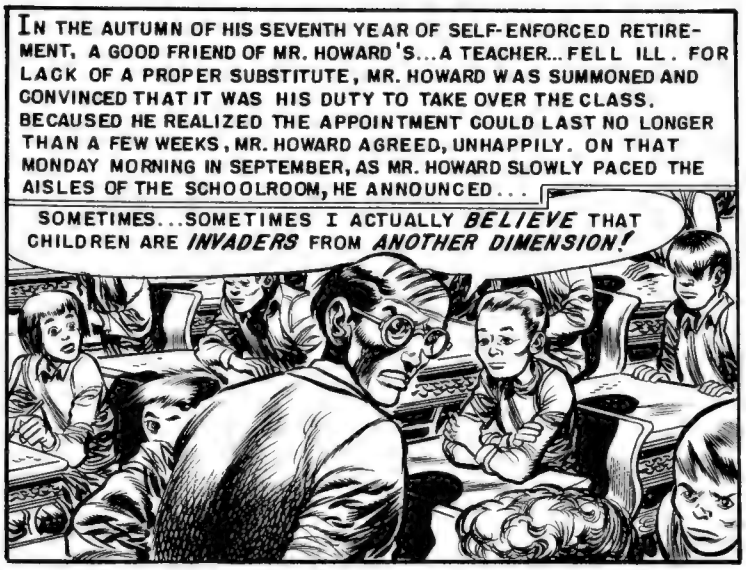
MICHAEL DIED...

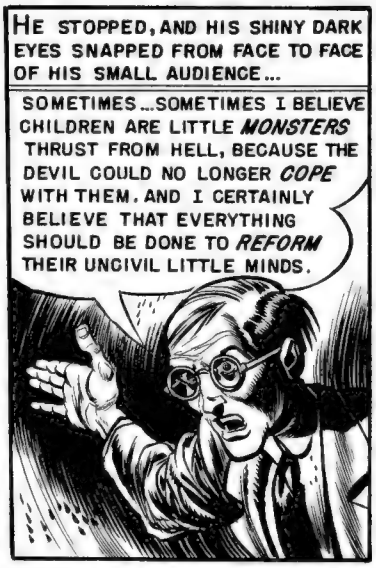
NOTHING WAS DONE ABOUT IT. THE POLICE SHRUGGED ELOQUENTLY. THESE CHILDREN WERE EIGHT OR NINE...THEY DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY WERE DOING. SO...

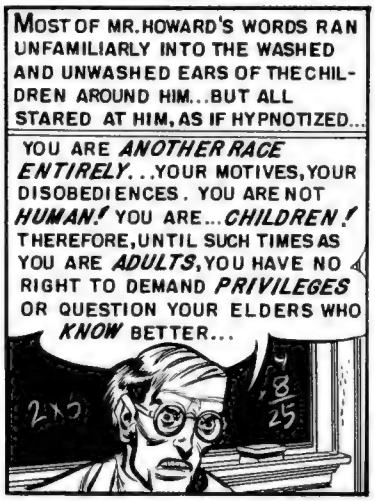


MR. HOWARD GAVE NO ANSWER. HE REMAINED SILENT, AND A TERRIBLE LIGHT FILLED HIS EYES, AND LATER HE REMARKED...

MR. HOWARD PACKED HIS THINGS AND WENT TO LIVE IN A SMALL NEARBY TOWN FOR SEVEN YEARS ON AN INCOME MANAGED FROM WRITING POETRY. HE NEVER MARRIED. THE FEW WOMEN HE APPROACHED ALWAYS DESIRED...

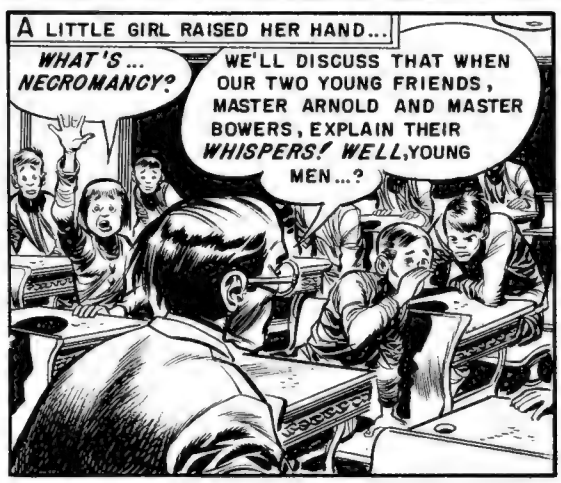

IN THE AUTUMN OF HIS SEVENTH YEAR OF SELF-ENFORCED RETIREMENT, A GOOD FRIEND OF MR. HOWARD'S...A TEACHER... FELL ILL. FOR LACK OF A PROPER SUBSTITUTE, MR. HOWARD WAS SUMMONED AND CONVINCED THAT IT WAS HIS DUTY TO TAKE OVER THE CLASS. BECAUSED HE REALIZED THE APPOINTMENT COULD LAST NO LONGER THAN A FEW WEEKS, MR. HOWARD AGREED, UNHAPPILY. ON THAT MONDAY MORNING IN SEPTEMBER, AS MR. HOWARD SLOWLY PACED THE AISLES OF THE SCHOOLROOM, HE ANNOUNCED...
SOMETIMES...SOMETIMES I ACTUALLY *BELIEVE* THAT CHILDREN ARE *INVADERS* FROM *ANOTHER DIMENSION!*

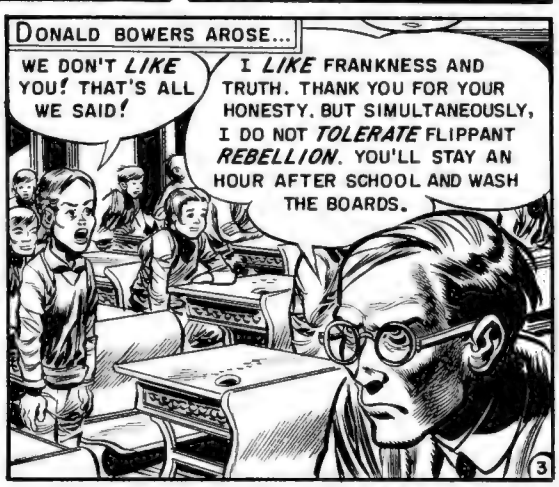

HE STOPPED, AND HIS SHINY DARK EYES SNAPPED FROM FACE TO FACE OF HIS SMALL AUDIENCE...
SOMETIMES...SOMETIMES I BELIEVE CHILDREN ARE LITTLE *MONSTERS* THRUST FROM HELL, BECAUSE THE DEVIL COULD NO LONGER *COPE* WITH THEM. AND I CERTAINLY BELIEVE THAT EVERYTHING SHOULD BE DONE TO *REFORM* THEIR UNCIVIL LITTLE MINDS.


MOST OF MR. HOWARD'S WORDS RAN UNFAMILIARLY INTO THE WASHED AND UNWASHED EARS OF THE CHILDREN AROUND HIM...BUT ALL STARED AT HIM, AS IF HYPNOTIZED...
YOU ARE *ANOTHER RACE ENTIRELY*...YOUR MOTIVES, YOUR DISOBEDIENCES. YOU ARE NOT *HUMAN!* YOU ARE...*CHILDREN!* THEREFORE, UNTIL SUCH TIMES AS YOU ARE *ADULTS*, YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO DEMAND *PRIVILEGES* OR QUESTION YOUR ELDERS WHO *KNOW* BETTER...

MR. HOWARD PAUSED AND PUT HIS ELEGANT RUMP UPON THE CHAIR BEHIND THE NEAT DUSTLESS DESK...
LIVING IN A WORLD OF FANTASY... WELL, THERE'LL BE NO FANTASY *HERE!* YOU'LL SOON DISCOVER THAT A *RULER* ON YOUR *HAND* IS NO *DREAM*, NO *FAERIE FRILL*, NO *PETER PAN EXCITEMENT*...

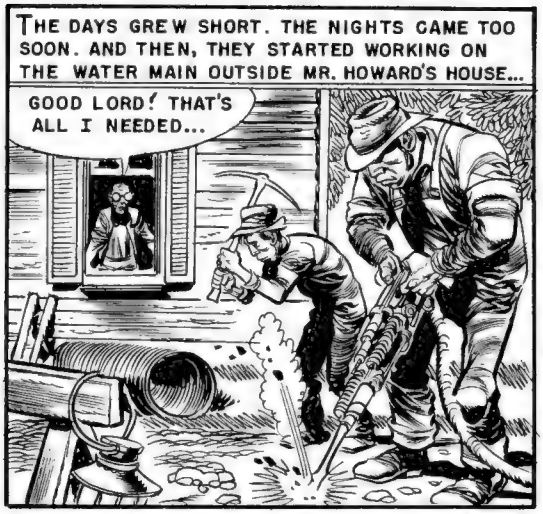
HAVE I *FRIGHTENED* YOU? I *HAVE! GOOD!* YOU *DESERVE* TO BE! I WANT YOU TO KNOW WHERE WE *STAND!* I'M *NOT AFRAID OF YOU! HERE!* WHAT ARE YOU *WHISPERING* ABOUT, BACK THERE? SOME *NECROMANCY* OR OTHER...?


A LITTLE GIRL RAISED HER HAND...
WHAT'S... NECROMANCY?
WE'LL DISCUSS THAT WHEN OUR TWO YOUNG FRIENDS, MASTER ARNOLD AND MASTER BOWERS, EXPLAIN THEIR *WHISPERS! WELL*, YOUNG MEN...?

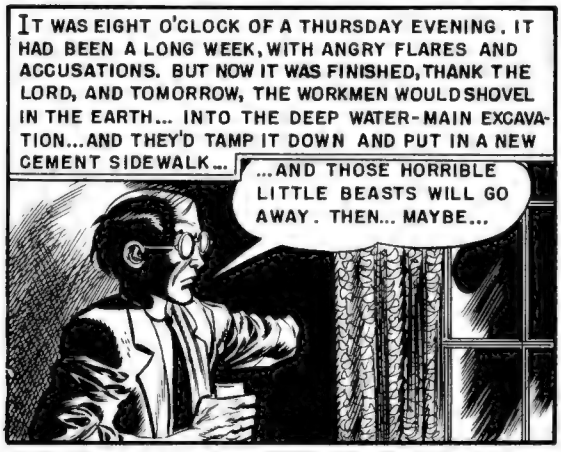

DONALD BOWERS AROSE...
WE DON'T *LIKE* YOU! THAT'S ALL WE SAID!
I *LIKE* FRANKNESS AND TRUTH. THANK YOU FOR YOUR HONESTY. BUT SIMULTANEOUSLY, I DO NOT *TOLERATE* FLIPPANT *REBELLION*. YOU'LL STAY AN HOUR AFTER SCHOOL AND WASH THE BOARDS.
3

AFTER SCHOOL, WALKING HOME, WITH AUTUMN LEAVES FALLING BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER HIS PASSING, MR. HOWARD CAUGHT UP WITH FOUR OF HIS STUDENTS. HE RAPPED HIS CANE SHARPLY ON THE SIDEWALK...
HERE! WHAT ARE YOU CHILDREN DOING? EXPLAIN! WHAT YOU WERE DOING HERE WHEN I CAME UP?
PLAYING POISON!
THEIR TEACHER'S FACE TWISTED. HE WAS CAREFULLY SARCASTIC...
POISON!? POISON, POISON, PLAYING POISON!? WELL! AND HOW DOES ONE PLAY POISON?
WHENEVER WE COME TO A DEAD MAN, WE JUMP OVER HIM!
IF YOU JUMP ON A DEAD MAN'S GRAVE, THEN YOU'RE POISONED AND FALL DOWN AND DIE!
DEAD MEN... GRAVES... POISONED? WHERE DID YOU GET THIS DEAD MAN IDEA?
SEE? ON THIS SQUARE! THE NAMES OF THE TWO DEAD MEN!
RIDICULOUS! THOSE ARE THE NAMES OF THE CONTRACTORS WHO MIXED AND LAID THE CEMENT SIDEWALK!
MELVIN & TODD
EDITH AND CLARA BOTH GASPED WILDLY AND TURNED ACCUSING EYES TO THE TWO BOYS...
YOU SAID THEY WERE GRAVESTONES!
YEAH! THEY ARE! WELL ALMOST, ANYWAY...
DELIBERATE LIES! FALSIFICATIONS OF THE HIGHEST CALIBRE! THERE'LL BE NO MORE OF THIS... UNDERSTAND?
MR. HOWARD SWUNG OFF DOWN THE STREET...
I HOPE A BIRD DROPS SOMETHING RIGHT SMACK ON HIS NOSE...
COME ON, CLARA. LET'S PLAY POISON.
IT'S BEEN SPOILED! I'M GOING HOME!
I'M POISONED! LOOK! I'M POISONED! GAHHH...
OH...
4

SATURDAY MORNING, MR. HOWARD GLANCED OUT OF HIS FRONT WINDOW AND SWORE WHEN HE SAW ISABEL MAKING CHALK MARKS ON THE SIDEWALK AND THEN HOPPING ABOUT, MAKING A MONOTONOUS SING-SONG WITH HER VOICE...
STOP THAT!
RUSHING OUT, HE ALMOST FLUNG HER TO THE PAVEMENT IN HIS EMOTION. HE GRABBED HER AND SHOOK HER VIOLENTLY AND LET HER GO AND STOOD OVER HER AND THE CHALK MARKS...
I WAS ONLY PLAYING HOPSCOTCH!
I DON'T CARE! YOU CAN'T PLAY IT HERE! YOUNG WITCH...
BENDING, HE ERASED THE CHALK MARKS WITH HIS HANDKERCHIEF, MUTTERING...
PENTAGRAMS. RHYMES AND INCANTATIONS. AND ALL LOOKING PERFECTLY INNOCENT. GOD, HOW INNOCENT! YOU LITTLE FIEND!
HE MADE AS IF TO STRIKE HER, BUT STOPPED. ISABEL RAN OFF WAILING...
GO AHEAD, YOU LITTLE FOOL. RUN AND TELL YOUR COHORTS THAT YOU'VE FAILED. THEY WILL HAVE TO TRY SOME OTHER WAY. THEY WON'T GET AROUND ME, THEY WON'T. OH, NO...
MR. HOWARD STALKED BACK INTO THE HOUSE AND POURED HIMSELF A STIFF DRINK OF BRANDY. THE REST OF THE DAY HE HEARD THE CHILDREN PLAYING KICK-THE-CAN, HIDE-AND-SEEK, OVER-ANNIE-OVER, JACKS, TOPS, MIBS... AND THE SOUND OF THE LITTLE MONSTERS IN EVERY SHRUB AND SHADOW WOULD NOT LET HIM REST...
ANOTHER WEEK OF THIS, AND I'LL GO STARK, STARING, MAD! GOD IN HEAVEN, WHY WEREN'T WE ALL BORN ADULTS?
ANOTHER WEEK, THEN... AND THE HATRED GROWING BETWEEN HIM AND THE CHILDREN. THE HATE AND THE FEAR GROWING APACE...
BUT THEY WON'T TOUCH ME! THEY WON'T DARE TOUCH ME! IT'S ALL VERY SILLY, ANYHOW... AND THERE'S NOTHING TO IT. I'LL SOON BE AWAY FROM HERE, AND... THEM. I'LL SOON...
SUDDENLY, THERE WAS A WHITE SKULL AT THE WINDOW...
GASP...
5

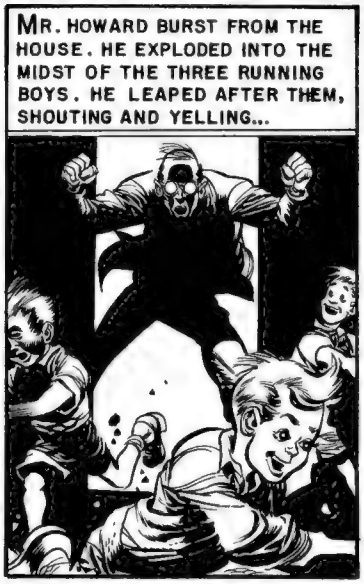

THE DAYS GREW SHORT. THE NIGHTS CAME TOO SOON. AND THEN, THEY STARTED WORKING ON THE WATER MAIN OUTSIDE MR. HOWARD'S HOUSE...
GOOD LORD! THAT'S ALL I NEEDED...

CHILDREN LOVE EXCAVATIONS, HIDING PLACES, PIPES AND CONDUITS AND TRENCHES. THEY WERE EVER ASCRAMBLE OVER AND ON AND DOWN IN AND UP OUT OF THE HOLES WHERE THE NEW PIPES WERE BEING LAID. MR. HOWARD HAD TO CONTINUALLY CHASE THEM...
I TOLD YOU TO STAY AWAY FROM THERE! NOW, GO ON! GO ON HOME!
AW...


IT WAS EIGHT O'CLOCK OF A THURSDAY EVENING. IT HAD BEEN A LONG WEEK, WITH ANGRY FLARES AND ACCUSATIONS. BUT NOW IT WAS FINISHED, THANK THE LORD, AND TOMORROW, THE WORKMEN WOULD SHOVEL IN THE EARTH... INTO THE DEEP WATER-MAIN EXCAVATION... AND THEY'D TAMP IT DOWN AND PUT IN A NEW CEMENT SIDEWALK...
...AND THOSE HORRIBLE LITTLE BEASTS WILL GO AWAY. THEN... MAYBE...

THERE WAS A WHITE SKULL AT THE WINDOW...
GOOD LORD!

THERE COULD BE NO DOUBT THAT A BOY'S HAND HELD THE SKULL AGAINST THE GLASS... TAPPING AND MOVING IT. THERE WAS A CHILDISH TITTERING FROM OUTSIDE...
HEY, YOU!


MR. HOWARD BURST FROM THE HOUSE. HE EXPLODED INTO THE MIDST OF THE THREE RUNNING BOYS. HE LEAPED AFTER THEM, SHOUTING AND YELLING...

THE STREET WAS DARK, BUT HE SAW THE FIGURES DART BEYOND AND BELOW HIM. HE SAW THEM SORT OF BOUND AND COULD NOT REMEMBER THE REASON FOR THIS, UNTIL TOO LATE...
6

THE EARTH OPENED UNDER HIM, AND HE FELL INTO THE PIT, HIS HEAD TAKING A TERRIFIC BLOW FROM A LAID WATER PIPE...

THUD

AND AS HE LOST CONSCIOUSNESS, HE HAD AN IMPRESSION OF AN AVALANCHE, SET OFF BY HIS FALL, CASCADING DOWN COOL MOIST PELLETS OF DIRT UPON HIS PANTS, HIS SHOES, UPON HIS COAT, UPON HIS SPINE, UPON THE BACK OF HIS NECK, HIS HEAD, FILLING HIS MOUTH, HIS EARS, HIS EYES, HIS NOSTRILS...

THE NEIGHBOR LADY WITH THE EGGS WRAPPED IN A NAPKIN KNOCKED ON MR. HOWARD'S DOOR THE NEXT DAY FOR FIVE MINUTES. WHEN SHE OPENED THE DOOR, FINALLY, AND WALKED IN, SHE FOUND NOTHING BUT SPECULES OF RUG DUST FLOATING IN THE SUNNY AIR. AS SHE SAID MANY TIMES IN THE FOLLOWING YEARS...

FUNNIEST THING! WHAT *EVER* HAPPENED TO *MR. HOWARD?*

AND ADULTS, BEING WHAT THEY ARE, NEVER OBSERVANT, PAID NO ATTENTION TO THE CHILDREN PLAYING POISON IN THE FOLLOWING AUTUMNS. EVEN WHEN THE CHILDREN LEAPED OVER ONE PARTICULAR SQUARE OF CEMENT, TURNED AROUND, AND GLANCED AT THE MARKS ON IT WHICH READ...

M. HOWARD R.I.P.

WHO'S MR. HOWARD, BILLY?

AW, I GUESS *HE'S* THE GUY WHO *LAID* THE CEMENT.

M. HOWARD R.I.P.

WHAT DOES *R.I.P.* MEAN?

AW, WHO KNOWS? *YOU'RE POISON!* YOU *STEPPED* ON IT!

GET *ALONG*, CHILDREN. *DON'T BLOCK MOTHER'S PATH! GET ALONG!*

HEH, HEH! WELL, THAT'S IT KIDDIES! THAT'S MR. BRADBURY'S TALE, THE WAY HE WROTE IT! HOPE YOU LIKED IT! NOW, I'LL TURN YOU BACK TO THE VAULT-KEEPER! I'LL HAVE MORE RAY BRADBURY CHILLERS IN THE FUTURE, SO LOOK FOR THEM! 'BYE, NOW!

THE END

THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE,HEE! YEP, KIDDIES, IT'S YOUR HOSTESS IN *THE HAUNT OF FEAR*, *THE OLD WITCH*, STIRRING HER *CAULDRON* AGAIN, READY TO SERVE YOU ANOTHER *HORROR HELPING*. THE *REEKING RECIPE* I'VE COOKED UP *THIS* TIME WAS *FIRST* DISHED OUT BY A VERY DEAR *FIEND* OF MINE, AMERICA'S *FOREMOST FANTASY WRITER*, ***RAY BRADBURY!*** SO, TUCK YOUR *DROOL CUPS* UNDER YOUR CHINS, AND I'LL FEED YOU MY *ADAPTATION* OF *MR. BRADBURY'S*...

THERE WAS AN OLD WOMAN!

FANTASY
BURY
THE TALL DARK YOUNG MAN STOOD QUIETLY, NOT MOVING. AUNT TILDY SHOOK HER HEAD, FUSSING WITH HER KNITTING...
NO! THERE'S *NO USE ARGUING*. I GOT MY *MIND FIXED*. YOU RUN *ALONG* WITH YOUR SILLY *WICKER BASKET*. LAND,LAND, WHERE'D YOU *EVER* GET NOTIONS LIKE *THAT?* YOU JUST SKIT *OUT* OF HERE AND DON'T *BOTHER* ME.
GHASTLY

THE TALL DARK MAN SAT DOWN. HE JUST SAT THERE, STARING. THE BONE-PORCELAIN, FLOWERED CLOCK ON THE MANTEL CHIMED THREE. OUT IN THE HALL, GROUPED AROUND THE WICKER BASKET, FOUR MEN WAITED, QUIETLY, HARDLY MOVING, AS IF THEY WERE THERE...

THE DARK YOUNG MAN WATCHED AUNT TILDY. SOMETHING IN HIS FACE SUGGESTED THAT THE BASKET WOULDN'T BE SO LIGHT AFTER A WHILE. THERE'D BE SOMETHING IN IT...

NOW *ABOUT* THAT WICKER BASKET. IT'S PAST *SIX FEET LONG*, AND BY THE *LOOK* OF IT, IT *AIN'T LAUNDRY*. AND THOSE *FOUR MEN* YOU WALKED IN WITH, YOU DON'T NEED *THEM* TO CARRY THE BASKET... WHY, IT'S LIGHT AS *THISTLES*! EH?

NOW *WHERE'VE* I SEEN A WICKER LIKE *THAT* BEFORE? SEEMS TO ME... *OH!* *NOW* I REMEMBER! IT WAS WHEN MRS. DWYER *PASSED AWAY* NEXT DOOR.

AUNT TILDY SET HER KNITTING DOWN STERNLY...

SO *THAT'S* WHAT YOU'RE HERE FOR. I *THOUGHT* YOU WERE WORKIN' TO *SELL* ME SOMETHING. WELL YOU JUST SET TILL *EMILY* COMES HOME. *SHE'LL* TAKE CARE OF YOU. SHE'LL SHOO YOU OUT OF THE PARLOR SO *QUICK*, IT'LL...

THE DARK MAN LOOKED AT AUNT TILDY AS IF SHE WERE TIRED...

NO! I'M *NOT!* I'M *NOT* TIRED! GREAT SONS O' GOSHEN ON THE GILBERRY PIKE. I GOT A HUNDRED *COMFORTERS*, TWO HUNDRED *SWEATERS*, AND SIX HUNDRED *POT-HOLDERS* IN THESE FINGERS, NO MATTER *HOW* SKINNY THEY ARE. YOU RUN AND COME *BACK* WHEN THEY'RE *DONE*... AND MAYBE I'LL *TALK* TO YOU...

THERE WAS A NOISE. THE MANTEL CLOCK SOUNDED THREE. STRANGE! IT SEEMED TO HER THAT IT HAD CHIMED THREE ONCE BEFORE...

ARE YOU JUST GOIN' TO *SIT* THERE, YOUNG MAN?

HE WAS...

THEN, YOU WON'T MIND IF I TAKE A NAP. JUST A CAT NAP. NOW YOU DON'T GET UP OFF THAT CHAIR. YOU SET THERE. YOU SET THERE AND DON'T COME CREEPIN' AROUND ME, JUST GOIN' TO CLOSE MY EYES FOR A WEE SPELL...

SO FEATHERY. SO DROWSY. SO DEEP. UNDER WATER, ALMOST. OH, SO NICE. *WHO'S* THAT MOVIN' *AROUND* IN THE DARK WITH MY EYES CLOSED? *WHO'S* THAT *KISSIN'* MY CHEEK? *YOU*, EMILY? NO. GUESS IT WAS MY THOUGHTS. ONLY DREAMIN'. DRIFTIN'. DRIFTIN' OFF... OFF...

2

THE CLOCK CHIMED THREE AGAIN. AUNT TILDY SAT UP. THE YOUNG MAN IN THE DARK SUIT STOOD NEAR THE DOOR...
YOU LEAVIN' SO SOON, YOUNG MAN? GOOD THING! EMILY'S COMIN' HOME AND SHE'D FIX YOU. HAD TO GIVE UP, DIDN'T YOU? COULDN'T CONVINCE ME, COULD YOU? WELL, YOUNG MAN, YOU NEEDN'T BOTHER COMIN' BACK TO TRY AGAIN!
THE DARK YOUNG MAN BOWED WITH SLIGHT DIGNITY. HE HAD NO INTENTION OF COMING BACK... EVER...
FINE. WHY YOU COULDN'T GET ME OUT OF THIS HOUSE. NOSIREE! WHY, I'M GOING TO KNIT IN THIS WINDOW THE NEXT THOUSAND YEARS. THEY'LL HAVE TO CHEW THE BOARDS AROUND ME TO... TO... QUIT LOOKIN' LIKE THE CAT THAT ATE THE BIRD! GET OUT AND TOTE THAT FOOL WICKER BOX WITH YOU!
THE FOUR MEN TREADED HEAVILY OUT THE FRONT DOOR. TILDY STUDIED THE WAY THEY HANDLED THE WICKER. IT WASN'T HEAVY, YET THEY STAGGERED WITH ITS WEIGHT. SHE GLANCED ABOUT CONCERNEDLY...
HERE, NOW! DID YOU STEAL SOME OF MY ANTIQUES? MY BOOKS? NO. THE CLOCKS? NO. WHAT YOU GOT IN THAT WICKER?
THE DARK MAN OFFERED THE LID OF THE WICKER TO AUNT TILDY. IN PANTOMIME HE WONDERED IF SHE'D LIKE TO OPEN IT AND GAZE INSIDE...
CURIOUS? ME? PSHAW, NO. GET OUT! GET OUTA HERE! GOODBYE!
THE DOOR SLAMMED. THAT WAS BETTER. DARNED FOOL MEN WITH THEIR MAGGOTY IDEAS...
AH. HERE COMES EMILY. ABOUT TIME. BUT, LAND. SHE LOOKS PALE AND FUNNY TODAY. WALKIN' SO SLOW...
EMILY SHUFFLED INTO THE PARLOR, HEAD DOWN...
EMILY. I BEEN WAITIN' FOR YOU. THERE WAS THE DARNDEST FOOL MEN JUST HERE WITH A WICKER. GLAD YOU'RE HOME! EMILY...
EMILY! STOP SCREAMING!
3

A WHITE-SMOCKED MAN, EVIDENTLY A MORTICIAN, GLANCED UP FROM THE RECENTLY ARRIVED WICKER AS AUNT TILDY STORMED INTO THE MORTUARY...
MADAME! THIS IS NO FIT PLACE FOR A GENTLE-WOMAN!
WELL, GLAD YOU FEEL THAT WAY. THEM'S MY SENTIMENTS, EXACTLY. I DON'T WANT ME HERE! I WANT ME HOME!" I GOT EMILY TO FEED! SWEATERS TO KNIT!" CLOCKS TO WIND...
THE MORTICIAN LOOKED AT HER...THEN AT THE WICKER. HE MOUTHED HIS WORDS WITH APPARENT RELISH, AND A WINNOWING OF HIS KNIVES, TUBES, JARS AND INSTRUMENTS...
MADAME! I HAVE WORK TO DO! A BODY HAS ARRIVED!
YOU LAY SO MUCH AS A CUTICLE ON THAT BODY AND I'LL THRASH YOU...
THE MORTICIAN OPENED THE WICKER LID CASUALLY. THEN, IN A RECURRENT SERIES OF SCRUTINIES, HE REALIZED THAT THE BODY INSIDE WAS...IT SEEMED...COULD IT BE...
EH...THIS LADY, HERE! SHE IS...A... RELATIVE?
NO, YOU FOOL! ME! DO YOU HEAR? ME! I WANT MY BODY BACK!
THE MORTICIAN CONSIDERED THE IDEA. HE SHOOK HIS HEAD...
NO! THINGS LIKE THIS DON'T HAPPEN! GEORGE! SHOW HER OUT! GET HELP FROM THE OTHERS! I CAN'T WORK WITH A CRANK PRESENT!
THE FOUR MEN ASSEMBLED AND CONVERGED. AUNT TILDY WAS A LACE FORTRESS, ARMS CROSSED IN DEFIANCE...
WON'T BUDGE...
SHE REPEATED THIS AS SHE WAS EVICTED IN CONSECUTIVE MOVES, LIKE A PAWN ON A CHESSBOARD, FROM THE LABORATORY. FINALLY, SHE SAT DOWN ON A CHAIR IN THE VESTIBULE OF THE FUNERAL PARLOR, THERE WERE PEWS GOING BACK INTO GREY SILENCE, AND A FLOWER SMELL...
YOU CAN'T SIT THERE, MA'AM! THAT'S WHERE THE BODY RESTS FOR THE SERVICES T'MORROW!
I'M SITTIN' HERE TILL I GET WHAT I WANT!
MR. CARRINGTON, MORTUARY PRESIDENT, HEARD THE DISTURBANCE AND CAME TODDLING DOWN THE AISLE TO INVESTIGATE...
HERE, HERE! MORE RESPECT! OH. MADAME. MAY I HELP YOU?
GO IN THAT BACK ROOM THERE AND TELL THAT EAGER INVESTIGATOR TO QUIT FOOLIN' WITH MY BODY!
4

MR. CARRINGTON HURRIED OFF. AFTER FIFTEEN MINUTES OF COMPARING NOTES WITH THE MORTICIAN BEHIND CLOSED DOORS, HE RETURNED, THREE SHADES WHITER...
UH... THAT IS... MOST IRREGULAR! MOST IRREGULAR!
LOOK HERE, MISTER BLOOD AND BONES! YOU TELL THAT...
BUT HE'S ALREADY PUMPING THE BLOOD FROM THE BODY!
WHAT?
YES. YES. SO, YOU JUST GO AWAY, NOW, THERE'S NOTHING TO BE DONE. THE BLOOD'S RUNNING AND SOON THE BODY'LL BE ALL FILLED WITH NICE FRESH FORMALDEHYDE. AND BESIDES... HE'S ALSO PERFORMING A BRIEF AUTOPSY!
CUT-TIN' ME, IS HE?
Y-YES. TO DETERMINE CAUSE OF DEATH, Y'KNOW. HE...
MARCH STRAIGHT IN AND TELL THAT CUT-'EM-UP TO PUMP ALL THAT FINE NEW ENGLAND BLOOD RIGHT BACK INTO THAT FINE-SKINNED BODY! AND IF HE'S TAKEN ANYTHING OUT, FOR HIM TO ATTACH IT BACK IN SO IT'LL FUNCTION PROPER! YOU HEAR?
THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO. NOTHING!
ALL RIGHT! I'M SETTIN' HERE... THE NEXT TWO HUNDRED YEARS! YOU HEAR? AND ANYTIME ANYONE COMES NEAR ME, I'LL SPIT ECTOPLASM RIGHT SQUIRT UP THEIR LEFT NOSTRIL...
YOU... YOU WOULDN'T DO THAT! YOU... YOU'LL DISLOCATE OUR BUSINESS! YOU WOULDN'T...
OH, WOULDN'T I?
ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT! YOU CAN HAVE YOUR BODY BACK!
HA!
5

AUNT TILDY SHOUTED IN TRIUMPH. THEN...WITH CAUTION...
INTACT? NO FORMALDEHYDE?
INTACT! NO FORMALDEHYDE!
BLOOD BACK IN IT?
BLOOD, MY GOD, YES, BLOOD! IF YOU'LL ONLY TAKE IT AND GO!
FAIR ENOUGH. FIX 'ER UP. IT'S A DEAL.
I'LL... TELL THE MORTICIAN.
AUNT TILDY DIDN'T LOOK AT THE BODY MUCH. HER ONLY COMMENT WAS...
NATURAL LOOKIN'. EASY! EASY! PUT THE WICKER BASKET DOWN T'THE FLOOR WHERE I CAN STEP IN IT.
THEN SHE LET HERSELF FALL BACK INTO THE WICKER. A BITING SENSATION OF ARCTIC COLDNESS, A GREAT UNLIKELY NAUSEA, AND A GIDDY WHORLING, LIKE TWO DROPS OF MATTER FUSING TOGETHER, WATER TRYING TO SEEP INTO CONCRETE...
THE MORTUARY PEOPLE WATCHED AUNT TILDY'S WRIGGLES... TRYING TO ASSIST WITH BOOSTING AND GRUNTING MOVES OF THEIR ARMS AND HANDS. SEEPING INTO COLD GRANITE. SEEPING INTO A FROZEN STATUE... SQUEEZING ALL THE WAY...
COME ALIVE, DERN YE! RAISE UP A BIT...
THE BODY HALF ROSE, RUSTLING IN THE DRY WICKER...
SEE! FEEL!
6

LIGHT ENTERED THE WEBBED BLIND EYES. THE BODY FELT THE ROOM WARMTH...

THE BODY TOOK A CREAKINGLY UNSTEADY STEP. THE BODY WALKED...

...AND AUNT TILDY BEGAN TO CRY TEARS OF UTTER HAPPINESS.

AND NOW, ANY AFTERNOON ABOUT FOUR, IF YOU WANT TO VISIT AUNT TILDY, YOU JUST WALK AROUND AND KNOCK ON HER DOOR. THERE'S A BIG BLACK FUNERAL WREATH ON IT... BUT DON'T MIND THAT. AUNT TILDY LEFT IT THERE. SHE HAS A SENSE OF HUMOR. JUST RAP ON THE DOOR AND SHE'LL SAY...

SHE'LL UNLOCK THE DOUBLE-BARRED, TRIPLE-LOCKED DOOR AND SHE'LL LAUGH AND SAY...

AND SHE'LL WHIP THE DOOR OPEN AND SLAM IT SHUT BEHIND YOU SO NO MAN IN BLACK CAN EVER SLIP IN WITH YOU. THEN SHE'LL ESCORT YOU IN, AND MAYBE POUR YOU SOME TEA... AND MAYBE... IF YOU'RE 'SPECIALLY GOOD, SHE'LL GIVE YOU A *TREAT*. SHE'LL UNFASTEN THE WHITE LACE AT HER NECK AND CHEST AND, FOR A BRIEF MOMENT, SHOW WHAT LIES BENEATH... *THE LONG BLUE AUTOPSY SCAR*...

HEE, HEE! YEP, FIENDS. THAT'S *AUNT TILDY'S STORY*... THE WAY *RAY BRADBURY* TOLD IT T'*ME*. I HOPE YOU *LIKED* MY LITTLE *SERVING* OF *SHIVERS* FOR THIS ISSUE OF *C.K'S MAG*. WE'LL ALL SEE YOU *NEXT* IN THE *VAULT-KEEPER'S... THE VAULT OF HORROR*. 'BYE, NOW!

THE END

Dark Carnival

Variations

THE SHOCKING WIND-UP TO THIS ELECTRIFYING TALE WILL JOLT YOU OUT OF YOUR SEATS!

Just DESSERTS!

A CRIME SUSPENSTORY
BERNARD TURNED OFF THE WATER AND DRIED HIS HANDS! HE CHUCKLED TO HIMSELF! THE DINNER PARTY HAD BEEN SUCH A GOOD IDEA! BRINGING ALL OF THOSE PEOPLE TOGETHER AT ONE TIME HAD BEEN A STROKE OF GENIUS! AND EVERYTHING HAD GONE SO WELL! HE HUNG UP THE TOWEL CAREFULLY AND SURVEYED HIMSELF IN THE MIRROR...
THERE! NOW I LOOK PRESENTABLE! BUT I SHOULD GO BACK TO THEM! I MUSTN'T KEEP MY GUESTS WAITING!
Jack Kamen
1

BERNARD UNLOCKED THE BATHROOM DOOR AND HURRIED INTO THE DINING ROOM! HIS DINNER GUESTS SAT ABOUT THE TABLE IN SILENCE! NO ONE STIRRED! BERNARD GRINNED AT THEM...

I'M SORRY I WAS *GONE* SO LONG! I JUST WANTED TO *CLEAN UP* A BIT BEFORE WE *TALKED THINGS OVER!* YOU DIDN'T *MIND,* DID YOU?

BERNARD LOOKED AT EACH GUEST! THERE WERE FIVE OF THEM AT THE TABLE, BESIDE HIMSELF! THERE WAS HIS WIFE, CORA...HIS BEST FRIEND, IRVING...HIS OLD-MAID AUNT, CLORISSA...HIS BUSINESS PARTNER, JULIUS...AND A NURSE NAMED FANNY...

I SUPPOSE THIS DINNER HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT OF A *SHOCK* TO ALL OF YOU! YOU'RE ALL SO *QUIET* NOW!

WELL, I CAN'T SAY I *BLAME* YOU! SHALL I *TELL* YOU HOW ALL THIS CAME ABOUT? WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW *WHY* YOU'RE ALL HERE...*LIKE THIS?*

BERNARD LIT A CIGARETTE AND MOVED AROUND THE TABLE BEHIND HIS GUESTS! HE STOPPED IN BACK OF FANNY...THE NURSE WHO'D ONCE WORKED FOR HIM...

I'LL START WITH *YOU,* FANNY! YOU REMEMBER WHEN I HIRED YOU...

'...AND I INTRODUCED YOU TO JIMMY...'

THIS IS MY SON, JIMMY, FANNY! YOUR JOB WILL BE TO *LOOK AFTER HIM...*

'AT LEAST YOU WERE *SUPPOSED* TO LOOK AFTER HIM! JIMMY WAS A GOOD BOY! HE LOOKED JUST LIKE MY *FIRST* WIFE, TOO! REMEMBER HOW YOU USED TO TAKE HIM FOR STROLLS?...'

HI, BEAUTIFUL! THAT'S A *NICE KID* YOU'VE GOT THERE!

IT AIN'T *MINE,* HANDSOME! I *TAKE CARE* OF LITTLE BOYS!

'REMEMBER THE DAY IT HAPPENED, FANNY? YOU WERE REALLY CLEVER, WEREN'T YOU? YOU STRAPPED JIMMY IN HIS STROLLER SO HE WOULDN'T WANDER OFF WHILE YOU FLIRTED WITH YOUR BOYFRIEND...'

WHAT TIME DO YOU GET *OFF* TONIGHT, BABY?

ABOUT *EIGHT!* GONNA *TAKE* ME SOMEPLACE?

'REALLY CLEVER, WASN'T IT? YOU WERE SO BUSY MAKING EYES AT YOUR LATEST FIND, YOU NEVER NOTICED THE STROLLER BEGIN TO ROLL...'
WHERE'D YOU LIKE TO GO, BABY?
SOMEPLACE NICE! A NIGHTCLUB, MAYBE...
'YOU'D FORGOTTEN TO PUT ON THE BRAKE! THE SIDEWALK WASN'T LEVEL! THE STROLLER ROLLED RIGHT OFF THE CURB...'
GEE, BABY! A NIGHT-CLUB IS EXPENSIVE!
MAYBE YOU'D BETTER LOOK FOR A NEW GIRL, HANDSOME!
'... RIGHT INTO THE PATH OF A SPEEDING TRUCK...'
SCREEEEE
BERNARD STOOD OVER FANNY... GLARING DOWN AT HER...
JIMMY'D BE ALIVE TODAY, FANNY! HE'D BE ALIVE TODAY IF YOU'D HAVE USED A LITTLE SENSE! IT WAS A STUPID THING TO DO! STUPID!
NEXT TO FANNY SAT JULIUS THOMPSON, BERNARD'S OLD BUSINESS PARTNER! BERNARD PATTED HIS SHOULDER...
DEAR JULIUS! WHAT TROUBLES YOU CAUSED WHEN YOU WIPED ME OUT!
'OH, YES! I KNEW YOU ENGINEERED THE WHOLE SCHEME! YOU WEREN'T AS CLEVER AS YOU THOUGHT! YOU FORGOT ABOUT OUR INTERCOM SYSTEM!...'
THAT'S RIGHT! JUST PAD YOUR BILLS TO OUR COMPANY! I'LL OKAY THEM AND GIVE YOU TWENTY PERCENT!
BUT, YOU'LL GO BUSTED FAST IF I DO THAT, JULIUS!
'YOU NEVER SHOULD HAVE PLANNED YOUR DIRTY DEALS RIGHT IN OUR OFFICES, JULIUS!...'
THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I WANT TO HAPPEN, JOE! I WANT TO WIPE BERNIE OUT...
OKAY, JULIE! I'LL DO WHAT YOU WANT! BUT WE BETTER MAKE THAT TWENTY-FIVE PERCENT!
3

BERNARD STARED DOWN AT HIS OLD-MAID AUNT, CLORISSA.
THAT'S WHEN I CAME TO YOU, AUNT CLORISSA! REMEMBER? I TOLD YOU THE WHOLE STORY! I TOLD YOU THAT IF I COULDN'T RAISE FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS, I'D BE BANKRUPT...
'REMEMBER WHAT YOU TOLD ME, AUNT CLORISSA? REMEMBER WHAT YOU SAID?...'
GOOD FOR YOU, BERNIE! SERVES YOU RIGHT! I TOLD YOU YOU'D END UP A WORTHLESS TRAMP!
BUT AUNT CLORISSA! I CAN BEAT THEM! FIVE THOUSAND! THAT'S ALL I NEED! IT WILL PULL ME THROUGH TILL I CAN PROVE THAT JULIUS IS BEHIND THIS SCHEME!
'BUT YOU WERE TOO STUPID TO UNDERSTAND! YOU SAT THERE, CLUTCHING YOUR BANKBOOKS... AND REFUSED...'
NOT ONE RED CENT, BERNARD! NOT A DIME!
PLEASE, AUNT CLORISSA! USE YOUR HEAD! YOU'LL GET YOUR MONEY BACK... WITH INTEREST!
'YOU LET ME SINK, DIDN'T YOU CLORISSA? YOU LET ME GO DOWN! WHEN JULIUS BROUGHT IN THE AUDITOR, I NEVER LET ON THAT I KNEW... DID I JULIUS?...'
THAT'S THE STORY, BERNIE! WE'RE THROUGH... WASHED UP!
YOU'LL HAVE TO DECLARE BANKRUPTCY, SIR!
THIS... THIS LEAVES ME FLAT BROKE, JULIUS! I'M... RUINED!
I'M... SORRY, BERNIE! THANK GOODNESS, I HAVE A LITTLE SOMETHING TO TIDE ME OVER!
LITTLE SOMETHING! YOU WERE BACK IN BUSINESS INSIDE TWO MONTHS! AND YOU THOUGHT I WAS STUPID! YOU THOUGHT I DIDN'T KNOW! IT WAS YOU WHO WAS FOOLISH, JULIUS! IT WAS YOU WHO DIDN'T USE YOUR HEAD!
'REMEMBER WHEN WE MET ON THE STREET, AND I INVITED YOU TO THIS DINNER PARTY?...'
WELL, BERNIE! HOW YOU DOIN' LATELY? LONG TIME NO SEE!
JULIUS! WHAT A STROKE OF LUCK! I'M HAVING A DINNER PARTY NEXT WEEK! YOU'RE INVITED... FOR OLD TIMES' SAKE!
4

AND YOU CAME, DIDN'T YOU? YOU FOOL...YOU STUPID FOOL! WHAT DID YOU EXPECT WHEN YOU GOT HERE? WHAT DID YOU ALL EXPECT? DID YOU THINK I INVITED YOU HERE OUT OF LOVE...FRIENDSHIP? DON'T YOU KNOW I DESPISE EACH OF YOU FOR WHAT YOU DID TO ME?
BERNARD MOVED AROUND THE TABLE STARING AT EACH OF THE FIVE PEOPLE SEATED BEFORE IT! HE STOPPED BEHIND HIS WIFE AND LIT ANOTHER CIGARETTE...
DEAR, SWEET, STUPID CORA! MY 'LOVING' WIFE! YOU NEVER SUSPECTED I KNEW ABOUT YOU AND IRVING, DID YOU?
BERNARD'S FACE GREW DARK! HE SNEERED AT CORA...
WELL, I KNEW IT ALL THE TIME, CORA! YOU DIDN'T FOOL ME FOR A MINUTE! I KNEW WHAT YOU WERE DOING BEHIND MY BACK!
IRVING SAT NEXT TO CORA! HE MADE NO SOUND...NO OUTCRY OF OBJECTION...
SURPRISED, AREN'T YOU, IRVING? YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE SAFE! YOU THOUGHT I'D NEVER SUSPECT MY BEST FRIEND OF TRYING TO STEAL MY WIFE!
'HOW IGNORANT YOU BOTH WERE! HOW BLIND! WHY, I EVEN REMEMBER THE NIGHT YOUR LITTLE AFFAIR BEGAN! WE'D BEEN OUT TOGETHER...JUST THE THREE OF US! REMEMBER...?'
LET'S GO, IRVING! BERNARD'S HAD A LITTLE TOO MUCH TO DRINK! I THINK WE'D BETTER GET HIM HOME!
SURE THING, CORA! C'MON, BERNIE!
'YES, I'D BEEN DRINKING! AND I HAD A RIGHT TO IT! ANY MAN IN MY POSITION WOULD HAVE GOTTEN HIMSELF DEAD DRUNK! AFTER ALL...BEING RUINED FINANCIALLY IS NO EASY THING TO TAKE!!'
HUH? WASHA MATTER? WHA' TIME ISH IT?
IT'S LATE, DEAR! TIME TO GO HOME!
I'LL GET A CAB, CORA!
'YOU HAD A PRETTY ROUGH TIME GETTING ME TO THE CAB, DIDN'T YOU, IRV...CORA? AND ON THE WAY HOME...'
BERNARD! SPEAK TO ME! IRV! WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM?
HE'S PASSED OUT, CORA! DON'T WORRY! WE'LL PUT HIM TO BED AND HE'LL BE OKAY IN THE MORNING!
5

'YOU REMEMBER THAT NIGHT, CORA? IRV CARRIED ME INTO THE HOUSE AND LAID ME ON OUR BED! AND YOU TOOK OFF MY SHOES! REMEMBER ?....
IS HE OKAY, CORA?
SH-H-H! HE'S ASLEEP!
WELL! IT... IT'S LATE! I'D BETTER BE GOING!
NOT JUST YET, IRV! I WANT TO TALK TO YOU! IT'S ABOUT BERNARD!
ANYTHING WRONG, CORA?
EVERYTHING! HE WAS WIPED OUT TODAY! I... I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M GOING TO DO!
WHY, YOU'RE GOING TO STICK WITH HIM, CORA! HE'LL NEED YOU MORE THAN EVER NOW! A WOMAN'S PLACE IS WITH THE MAN SHE LOVES!
BUT I DON'T LOVE HIM, IRV! I... I NEVER LOVED HIM!
WHAT? SAY THAT AGAIN!
I ONLY MARRIED HIM FOR HIS MONEY... THE MONEY HIS FIRST WIFE LEFT HIM! DO YOU THINK I'D HAVE MARRIED A WIDOWER... WITH A CHILD... OTHERWISE ?
CORA! I... I NEVER KNEW!
NO ONE KNEW! NOT EVEN BERNIE! A WOMAN DOESN'T BRAG ABOUT THOSE THINGS! AND THEN YOU HAD TO COME BACK FROM ABROAD... HIS BEST FRIEND!
WHAT HAVE I GOT TO DO WITH THIS?
IT WASN'T SO BAD TILL THEN! I EVEN FELT SORRY FOR HIM WHEN JIMMY DIED! BUT THEN YOU CAME HOME... AND I FELL IN LOVE WITH YOU!
6

'YOU'RE SURPRISED, AREN'T YOU, CORA? YOU DIDN'T THINK I HEARD WHAT WAS SAID THAT NIGHT! YOU THOUGHT I WAS OUT COLD ON THE BED...'
YOU...YOU FELL IN LOVE WITH ME?
I COULDN'T HELP MYSELF, IRV! I TRIED TO HIDE IT! I KNEW YOU WERE HIS BEST FRIEND!
'WHY, YOU WERE SO ENGROSSED IN EACH OTHER, YOU DIDN'T EVEN HEAR ME OPEN THE BEDROOM DOOR...DIDN'T EVEN KNOW I WAS WATCHING...'
YOU FOOL! YOU SILLY FOOL! WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME? WE'VE WASTED ALL THIS TIME! WHY, I'VE LOVED YOU SINCE THE FIRST DAY I MET YOU!
OH, IRV! IRV! KISS ME!
'AND YOU REALIZED I'D NEVER GIVE YOU A DIVORCE, DIDN'T YOU, CORA? SO YOU AND IRV STARTED CARRYING ON A LOVE AFFAIR BEHIND MY BACK! BUT YOU DID SUCH STUPID THINGS! YOU DIDN'T USE YOUR HEAD!...'
HE'S WORKING LATE, TONIGHT, DARLING! COME SEE ME!
I'LL BE RIGHT OVER, CORA!
'YOU BOTH MADE SO MANY MISTAKES! I CAME HOME EARLY THAT NIGHT! IRV'S CAR WAS PARKED OUTSIDE! I LOOKED IN THE WINDOW! YOU'D EVEN NEGLECTED TO PULL DOWN THE BLINDS...'
STUPID! STUPID! EVERY ONE OF YOU WERE STUPID! YOU DIDN'T THINK I KNEW!
YOU DIDN'T USE YOUR HEADS! NONE OF YOU DID!
PEOPLE WHO DON'T USE THEIR HEADS... DON'T NEED THEM...
7

BERNARD POUNDED THE TABLE IN ANGER! HIS GUESTS STIRRED! *CORA* PITCHED FORWARD! *FANNY* SLUMPED TO THE SIDE! *IRVING* SLID OFF HIS CHAIR AND DROPPED TO THE FLOOR! *AUNT CLORISSA* SAT STIFFLY! *JULIUS* SPRAWLED ACROSS HER LAP! BERNARD GRINNED AT THE *DECAPITATED CORPSES!* HE RAISED A GLASS OF WINE... IN TOAST...

AND NOW, COME SEE...
What the dog dragged in!
Jack Kamen
BETTY REACHED DEEP INTO HER WORLD OF DARKNESS AND PATTED JERRY'S SOFT SILKY HEAD! THEN SHE RAISED A WARNING FINGER... HER BLIND EYES STARING PAST THE SQUATTING DOG...
...AND MIND YOU, JERRY! GO STRAIGHT TO THE BUTCHER SHOP! MRS. SIMPSON WILL BE HERE SOON, AND I HAVE TO HAVE THAT ORDER IN THE HOUSE!
DEFTLY, WITH FINGERS LONG ACCUSTOMED TO THE RITUAL, BETTY FOLDED THE MEAT ORDER AND SLIPPED IT UNDER THE ANXIOUS DOG'S COLLAR...
SO COME RIGHT BACK WITH IT, YOU HEAR? THERE! NOW, OFF YOU GO!
1

JERRY STARTED AWAY LIKE A SHOT AT HIS MISTRESS'S COMMAND...SCAMPERING OUT OF THE BEDROOM AND DOWN THE RICKETY STAIRS...

AND WATCH OUT FOR *CARS*, BOY!

THROUGH THE BROKEN PANEL IN THE BATTERED FRONT DOOR, DOWN THE OVERGROWN PATH, THE DOG RACED...

...ON UP THE DUSTY ROAD TO TOWN! FROM HER BEDROOM WINDOW, BETTY SAT IN HER WHEELCHAIR, STARING OUT WITH SIGHTLESS EYES...

THEN, WHEN JERRY'S YELPS COULD NO LONGER BE HEARD, BETTY PUSHED HARD ON THE RIGHT WHEEL AND SWUNG AWAY FROM THE WARM SUNNY AIR OUTSIDE SO THAT SHE FACED THE DUSTY RAMSHACKLE INTERIOR OF HER RUN-DOWN HOUSE...

GOOD DOG! GOOD OLD JERRY! I DON'T KNOW *WHAT* I'D DO *WITHOUT* YOU!

MEANWHILE, FAR DOWN THE DUSTY ROAD, JERRY RACED ALONG...KICKING UP THE PEBBLES WITH HIS HIND PAWS! SOON, HE APPROACHED THE STATE HIGHWAY THAT LED INTO TOWN...

AS THE LOPING DOG SWUNG OUT OF THE DIRT SIDEROAD ONTO THE SMOOTH STRIP OF CONCRETE HIGHWAY, A SPEEDING CAR HURTLED AT HIM! THE STILL, HOT AFTERNOON AIR WAS FILLED WITH THE SCREAMING SHRIEK OF BRAKES AND THE YIPING SQUEAL OF A DOG IN PAIN...

GOOD LORD!

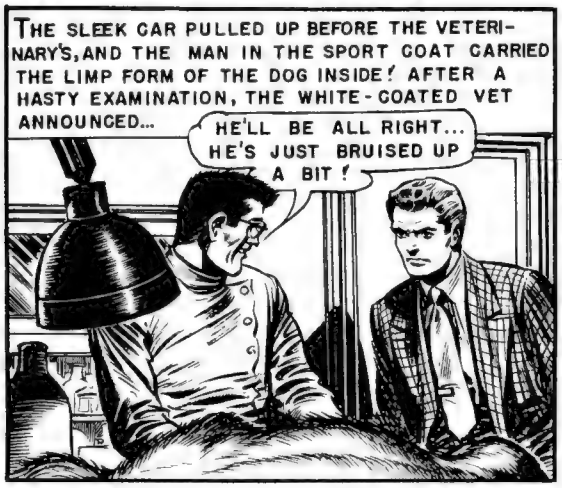
IN HER PLASTER-CRACKED ROOM, BETTY LIFTED HER SENSITIVE FINGERS FROM THE WART-LIKE BRAILLE BOOK AND LISTENED! IT CAME LIKE A FINE THREAD STRETCHED ACROSS THE SUNNY AFTERNOON AIR...THE FAINT SOUND OF A CAR...STOPPING! THEN IT WAS GONE...AS IF A GIANT SCISSOR HAD SNAPPED IT...

WHAT...WHAT WAS THAT? IT... SOUNDED LIKE BRAKES...OUT ON THE HIGHWAY!

2

THE MAN IN THE SNAPPY SPORT COAT LOOKED DOWN AT THE STILL FURRY MOUND LYING BEFORE HIS EXPENSIVE CAR! HE SHOOK HIS HEAD! THEN HE STOOPED AND PLACED HIS HAND ON THE DOG'S CHEST...
POOR THING! RAN RIGHT OUT IN FRONT OF ME! HE... WHAT'S THIS? HEART'S STILL BEATING! HE'S... ALIVE!

BETTY TURNED AT THE SOUND BEHIND HER...
JERRY! THAT YOU?
NO, MISS BETTY! 'TAIN'T JERRY! IT'S ME... MRS. SIMPSON! I LOOKED IN THE ICE-BOX B'FORE I CAME UP! HOW'D YOU EXPECT ME TO COOK YOUR DINNER WHEN THERE'S NOTHING TO COOK?


THE SLEEK CAR PULLED UP BEFORE THE VETERINARY'S, AND THE MAN IN THE SPORT COAT CARRIED THE LIMP FORM OF THE DOG INSIDE! AFTER A HASTY EXAMINATION, THE WHITE-COATED VET ANNOUNCED...
HE'LL BE ALL RIGHT... HE'S JUST BRUISED UP A BIT!

WHILE BACK AT THE HOUSE...
JERRY SHOULD BE BACK BY NOW, MRS. SIMPSON! I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT!
I DON'T MIND COMIN' IN AND COOKIN' FOR YOU, MISS BETTY, BUT I CAN'T WAIT AROUND ALL DAY! I'LL JUST HAVE TO MAKE DO WITH WHAT YOU HAVE!

THE AFTERNOON PASSED AND EVENING CAME... BUT STILL THE DOG DID NOT RETURN! BETTY SAT IN HER ROOM... IN HER WORLD OF DARKNESS... WAITING...
OH, JERRY! JERRY! WHERE ARE YOU?

WHILE A FEW MILES AWAY, IN HIS LUXURIOUS HOME, ROGER CARTWRIGHT... THE WEALTHY PHILANTHROPIST... COMFORTED THE INJURED JERRY...
JUST TAKE IT EASY, FELLER! IN A FEW DAYS, YOU'LL BE GOOD AS NEW! THEN WE'LL SEE ABOUT RETURNING YOU TO YOUR MASTER!

AND SO, TWO DAYS LATER, BETTY... HEARTBROKEN OVER THE DISAPPEARANCE OF HER CHERISHED COMPANION... GASPED AS HIS FRIENDLY BARK DRIFTED UP TO HER FROM BELOW...
JERRY! IT'S JERRY! HE'S COME BACK!
3

BETTY FLUNG HER ARMS ABOUT JERRY AS HE SCAMPERED INTO HER BEDROOM AND NUZZLED HIS WARM NOSE AGAINST HER TEAR-STREAKED CHEEK...
OH, JERRY! JERRY! I WAS AFRAID YOU'D BEEN KILLED!
HE ALMOST WAS, MISS!
BETTY LIFTED HER HEAD! SOMEONE WAS IN THE ROOM! SOMEONE HAD BROUGHT JERRY BACK TO HER! A MAN...
MY CAR STRUCK THE POOR FELLOW WHEN HE DARTED OUT ONTO THE HIGHWAY THREE DAYS AGO! I TOOK HIM HOME WITH ME! I TRACED HIM TO YOU BY THE NOTE IN HIS COLLAR!
WHO...WHO ARE YOU? I'M SORRY... I CAN'T SEE YOU! I'M BLIND!
ROGER CARTWRIGHT STUDIED THE ATTRACTIVE BLIND GIRL IN THE WHEELCHAIR AS SHE CLUTCHED HER DOG AFFECTIONATELY...
MY NAME IS... ER...YOU CAN CALL ME ROGER!
HOW DO YOU DO! I'M BETTY MARSH! I DON'T KNOW HOW TO THANK YOU, ROGER!
DON'T TRY, BETTY! IT WAS THE LEAST I COULD DO UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES!
DO YOU LIVE CLOSE BY, ROGER?
A FEW MILES AWAY! YOU HAVE A VERY CLEVER DOG! HE PRACTICALLY GUIDED ME HERE!
YES! HE IS SMART! HE DOES ALL MY SHOPPING FOR ME! YOU SEE, I CAN'T VERY WELL...CONFINED TO THIS WHEELCHAIR AS I AM!
ROGER AND BETTY CONTINUED TO CHAT, AND THE SHADOWS OUTSIDE BEGAN TO LENGTHEN AS THE AFTERNOON WORE AWAY...
WELL, I MUST BE GOING, BETTY! IT'S GETTING LATE!
YOU'LL COME AGAIN, WON'T YOU, ROGER? I HAVE SO FEW VISITORS!
ROGER LOOKED DOWN AT THE SWEET YOUNG HELPLESS THING BEFORE HIM...
OF COURSE I'LL COME AGAIN, BETTY! ANYTIME YOU WANT ME TO! JUST SEND YOUR DOG! HE KNOWS WHERE I LIVE!
WON'T YOU TELL ME? I DON'T EVEN KNOW YOUR LAST NAME!
4

ROGER SHOOK HIS HEAD...
NO, BETTY! I CAN'T TELL YOU MY LAST NAME OR WHERE I LIVE! I...I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND!
I...I DON'T UNDERSTAND, ROGER!
SOMEDAY YOU WILL! JUST TRUST ME! IF YOU WANT ME...JUST SEND JERRY!
GOOD-BYE!
GOOD-BYE, ROGER!
ROGER MADE HIS WAY OUT OF BETTY'S SHABBY ROOM AND DOWN THE RICKETY STAIRS....
I COULDN'T TELL HER WHO I AM! I'M WEALTHY! I'M KNOWN FOR MY CHARITABLE WORK! I WOULDN'T STAND A CHANCE! SHE'D THINK I WAS SEEING HER OUT OF PITY! SHE'D HATE ME FOR IT! AND I DON'T WANT THAT!
BETTY LISTENED AS ROGER'S CAR ROARED AWAY INTO THE GATHERING TWILIGHT! SHE HUGGED JERRY'S SOFT SILKY HEAD...PRESSING HER CHEEK AGAINST IT...
OH, JERRY! HE'S SO NICE! THANK YOU FOR FINDING HIM FOR ME!
SEVERAL DAYS LATER, AS ROGER CARTWRIGHT WAS SITTING ON THE TERRACE OF HIS LUXURIOUS HOME, A DOG CAME DASHING FURIOUSLY ACROSS HIS VAST WELL-KEPT LAWN...
JERRY! I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU TO COME! DOES BETTY WANT ME TO VISIT HER AGAIN? DOES SHE, FELLER?
BETTY SMILED AS JERRY'S HAPPY BARKING ANNOUNCED HIS RETURN...
ROGER?
YES, BETTY! I'M HERE! I'M SO GLAD YOU SENT JERRY FOR ME! I'D BEEN WAITING...
I'M HAPPY YOU CAME, ROGER! SIT DOWN HERE... NEXT TO ME! WE'LL TALK!
YES! WE HAVE SO MUCH TO TALK ABOUT!
3

A WEEK WENT BY! ROGER'S VISITS BECAME MORE FREQUENT! BETTY WOULD SEND JERRY FOR HIM, AND HE'D COME BACK WITH THE HAPPILY YELPING DOG! THEN THEY'D BE TOGETHER... LAUGHING... CHATTING! ONE DAY...
BETTY DARLING! WILL YOU MARRY ME?
PLEASE, ROGER! I COULDN'T! I'M AN INVALID... BLIND! I'LL BE A BURDEN!
BUT I LOVE YOU DARLING!
OH, ROGER! ROGER! DO YOU? I'VE LOVED YOU SINCE THE FIRST TIME YOU CAME HERE!
SWEETHEART!
DEAREST!
ROGER WAS WHISTLING A CHEERY TUNE AS HE SWUNG HIS CAR OUT OF THE DIRT SIDE-ROAD ONTO THE HIGHWAY! ENGROSSED IN THOUGHTS OF THE WONDERFUL HOURS HE'D JUST SPENT WITH BETTY, HE NEVER SAW THE FAST APPROACHING TRUCK...
THE NEXT DAY, BETTY SAT ALONE IN HER WORLD OF DARKNESS, WAITING FOR JERRY TO RETURN WITH ROGER... WAITING FOR THE HAPPY BARKING! BUT WHEN JERRY TROTTED IN SADLY... AND LAID HIS HEAD IN HER LAP, WHIMPERING...
JERRY! ISN'T ROGER HOME TODAY? I WONDER WHERE HE COULD BE?
THE DAY AFTER THAT, BETTY SENT JERRY ONCE AGAIN... AND ONCE AGAIN, JERRY RETURNED ALONE!
JERRY! DIDN'T YOU BRING HIM BACK TODAY EITHER? WHAT IS IT? YOU'RE TREMBLING!
DAY AFTER DAY, BETTY WOULD SEND JERRY FOR ROGER... AND DAY AFTER DAY, THE PANTING DOG WOULD RETURN... ALONE...
IT'S BEEN OVER A MONTH, JERRY! WHERE IS HE? WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HIM? OH, DEAR LORD! IF ONLY YOU COULD TALK... TELL ME WHAT'S WRONG!
6

SOON, JERRY EVEN REFUSED TO *GO* WHEN BETTY ORDERED HIM TO BRING BACK ROGER! THE DOG WOULD JUST SQUAT BEFORE HER, HIS HEAD COCKED TO ONE SIDE... HIS EYES SAD...WATCHING HER CRY...

PLEASE, JERRY! *PLEASE*... SOB, SOB... BRING ROGER HERE! I MISS HIM SO! *PLEASE!*

THEN, ONE DAY, ABOUT TWO MONTHS AFTER ROGER HAD STOPPED COMING TO CALL...AFTER BETTY'S TEARFUL PLEADING, THE DOG DARTED AWAY... DOWN THE RICKETY STEPS AND UP THE DUSTY ROAD! BY THAT NIGHT, HE'D STILL NOT RETURNED...

OH, JERRY! JERRY! YOU'VE DESERTED ME, *TOO!* I'M ALL ALONE, NOW!

DAYS WENT BY, BUT JERRY DID NOT COME BACK! BETTY SAT ALONE EACH NIGHT IN HER SHABBY BEDROOM...CRYING! ONE NIGHT, ABOUT A WEEK AFTER JERRY HAD GONE AWAY, SHE HEARD IT... WAY OFF IN THE DISTANCE... THE SOUND OF A DOG'S HAPPY BARKING...

JERRY! IT'S *JERRY!* HE'S COMING *BACK!*

BETTY HELD HER BREATH! THE SOUND OF DOG FEET PADDED ON THE PATH BELOW...AND BARKING EXPLODED THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR! JERRY CAME UP THE RICKETY STAIRS AND INTO HER ROOM...

OH, JERRY! JERRY! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? *WHERE*...

SUDDENLY BETTY DREW BACK FROM THE PANTING DOG! A FOUL ODOR FILLED THE ROOM! THE SMELL OF EARTH...DECAYED, GRAVEYARD EARTH! BETTY REACHED OUT INTO HER DARK WORLD...FEELING FOR THE DOG! A CHUNK OF RANCID, CRAWLING SOIL DROPPED INTO HER OPEN HAND...

JERRY! WHERE HAVE YOU *BEEN?*

BETTY SWUNG HER WHEELCHAIR AROUND! SOMEONE WAS COMING UP THE RICKETY STAIRS! SLOWLY... PAINFULLY... DRAGGING ONE LEG AFTER THE OTHER! THE BEDROOM DOOR SWUNG OPEN! IT STOOD FRAMED IN THE DOORWAY! BETTY STARED AT IT WITH SIGHTLESS EYES...

ROGER?

SO WHO ELSE? YEP, KIDDIES! IT WAS ROGER! *DEAD ROGER*, THAT IS! NOW WASN'T JERRY A LOYAL DOG? SIX FEET IS AN AWFUL LOT OF DIGGING FOR SUCH TINY PAWS! IT'S GOOD BETTY IS BLIND! SHE'S LUCKY SHE CAN'T *SEE* WHAT THE MUTT DRAGGED IN! BUT *YOU* CAN SEE SOMETHING HORRIBLE IF YOU WANT TO! MY *FACE!* A REAL 5X7 PHOTOGRAPH OF MY DECAYED PUSS...AS IT ACTUALLY APPEARS...IS AVAILABLE! READ MY COLUMN, *THE VAULTKEEPER'S CORNER*, FOR INFO ON HOW TO GET *YOURS!* AND WE'LL ALL SEE YOU NEXT IN *THE HAUNT OF FEAR!*

THE END

THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE! DON'T JUST STAND THERE! COME IN! COME IN! YOU ALL KNOW *ME* BY NOW... THE OLD WITCH, MISTRESS OF *THE HAUNT OF FEAR*! DRAW UP CLOSE TO THE BUBBLING, STEAMING CAULDRON! I HAVE A STORY TO TELL YOU! A STORY THAT WILL ABSOLUTELY *HORRIFY* YOU! A YARN OF *TERROR*... OF *REVENGE*... OF *DEATH*! THIS TASTY TALE, WHICH I AM ABOUT TO DISH OUT TO YOU, I CALL...

A STRANGE UNDERTAKING...

MY STORY BEGINS ONE COLD WINTRY DAY ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF A SMALL TOWN! SNOW BLANKETS EVERYTHING; IT COVERS THE COUNTRYSIDE LIKE A WHITE SHROUD... HEAVY... COLD... SILENT! IT LAYS THICK ON THE ROOFTOPS... IN DRIFTS AGAINST THE HOUSES... AND DEADLY STILL ON THE GRAVES OF THE TOWN CEMETERY...

HMMPH! GROUND'S FROZEN... FROZEN *SOLID*! LUCKY THING I HAVEN'T ANY CUSTOMERS! COULDN'T *BURY* 'EM, ANYWAY!

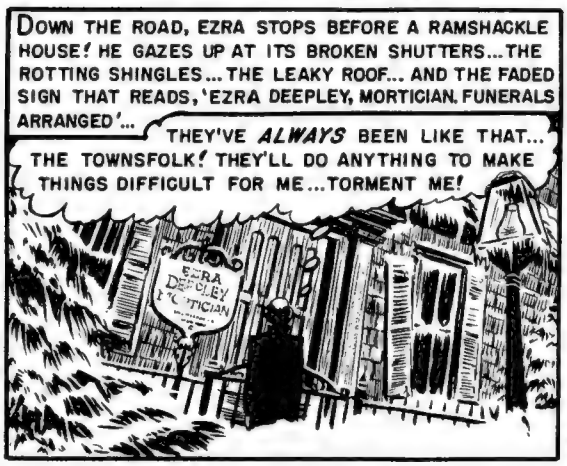
HOWDY, EZRA! ADMIRING YOUR HANDIWORK?

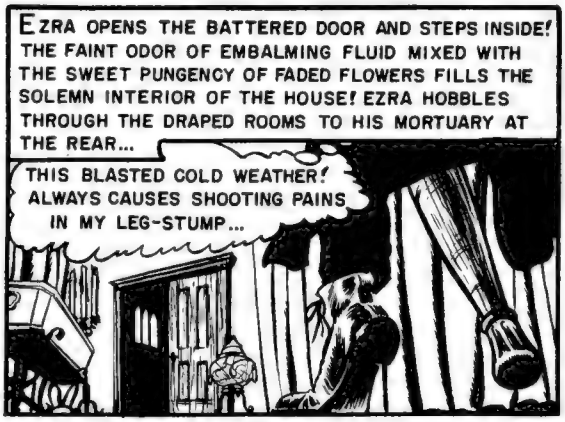
1

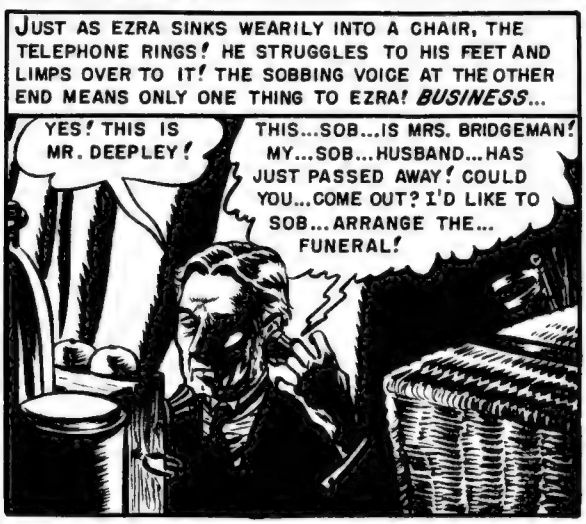
THAT'S THE CARETAKER OF THE CEMETERY GREETING *EZRA DEEPLEY, THE TOWN UNDERTAKER*...
JUST CHECKING... CLEM...JUST CHECKING!
I *DIG* YUH, EZRA! HAW, HAW!

THAT'S THE WAY IT ALWAYS IS WITH EZRA DEEPLEY! THEY KID HIM...JOKE WITH HIM...INSULT HIM!.. JUST BECAUSE HE'S AN UNDERTAKER...
DON'T TAKE ANY *WOODEN COFFINS*, EZRA!
WHY DON'T YOU *DROP DEAD*, CLEM?

EZRA DEEPLEY TAKES A LAST LOOK AROUND THE SNOW-LADEN CEMETERY, TURNS, AND PLODS ON HOME...
THEY *HATE* ME! ALL OF THEM! THEY *DESPISE* ME FOR WHAT I *AM*! WHY...*WHY*? I DON'T *HARM* THEM! I JUST... BURY THEM AFTER THEY'RE... GONE!


DOWN THE ROAD, EZRA STOPS BEFORE A RAMSHACKLE HOUSE! HE GAZES UP AT ITS BROKEN SHUTTERS...THE ROTTING SHINGLES...THE LEAKY ROOF... AND THE FADED SIGN THAT READS, 'EZRA DEEPLEY, MORTICIAN. FUNERALS ARRANGED'...
THEY'VE *ALWAYS* BEEN LIKE THAT... THE TOWNSFOLK! THEY'LL DO ANYTHING TO MAKE THINGS DIFFICULT FOR ME...TORMENT ME!
EZRA DEEPLEY MORTICIAN


EZRA OPENS THE BATTERED DOOR AND STEPS INSIDE! THE FAINT ODOR OF EMBALMING FLUID MIXED WITH THE SWEET PUNGENCY OF FADED FLOWERS FILLS THE SOLEMN INTERIOR OF THE HOUSE! EZRA HOBBLES THROUGH THE DRAPED ROOMS TO HIS MORTUARY AT THE REAR...
THIS BLASTED COLD WEATHER! ALWAYS CAUSES SHOOTING PAINS IN MY LEG-STUMP...


JUST AS EZRA SINKS WEARILY INTO A CHAIR, THE TELEPHONE RINGS! HE STRUGGLES TO HIS FEET AND LIMPS OVER TO IT! THE SOBBING VOICE AT THE OTHER END MEANS ONLY ONE THING TO EZRA! *BUSINESS*...
YES! THIS IS MR. DEEPLEY!
THIS...SOB...IS MRS. BRIDGEMAN! MY...SOB...HUSBAND...HAS JUST PASSED AWAY! COULD YOU...COME OUT? I'D LIKE TO SOB...ARRANGE THE... FUNERAL!

BRIDGEMAN? JOHN BRIDGEMAN? THE DENTIST? EZRA DEEPLEY'S HEART SKIPS A BEAT! HOW HE *HATED* JOHN BRIDGEMAN...
I...I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT, MRS. BRIDGEMAN! HOW DID IT HAPPEN?
INFLUENZA, MR. DEEPLEY! THERE'S AN EPIDEMIC IN TOWN!
2

THE ARRANGEMENTS ARE MADE, AND JOHN BRIDGEMAN'S BODY IS BROUGHT TO EZRA'S ESTABLISHMENT! AFTER THE MOURNING WIFE AND RELATIVES LEAVE, EZRA WHEELS THE DECEASED INTO HIS MORTUARY...

YOU... JOHN BRIDGEMAN! YOU HATED ME TOO, BECAUSE OF MY PROFESSION! REMEMBER WHEN I CAME TO YOU WITH ...A *CAVITY*...

'YOU JOKED WITH ME... CHIDED ME...'

WELL, WELL! *EZRA DEEPLEY!* WHAT'S COOKING AT THE CREMATORY, EZRA? HAW, HAW!

I... I HAVE A TOOTHACHE, DOCTOR!

'...AND THEN YOU TOLD ME THE TOOTH WOULD HAVE TO COME OUT.'

SORRY, EZRA! I CAN'T GIVE YOU GAS! I'M FRESH OUT! THIS MAY *HURT!*

I... I'M READY, DOCTOR!

YOU DID THAT ON PURPOSE, DIDN'T YOU? YOU DELIBERATELY *HURT* ME! YOU COULD HAVE GIVEN ME NOVOCAINE... SOMETHING... ONLY YOU PREFERRED TO PULL THE TOOTH... *PAINFULLY!* WELL, JOHN BRIDGEMAN, *NOW I CAN GET EVEN!*

THE FUNERAL IS HELD THE NEXT DAY! THE LITTLE GROUP OF MOURNERS STANDS ABOUT THE COFFIN AS A BRIEF SERVICE IS HELD IN THE BITING COLD! A LITTLE WAY OFF, EZRA DEEPLEY WATCHES...

IF THEY ONLY *KNEW*, JOHN BRIDGEMAN! IF THEY ONLY KNEW WHAT YOU *LOOK LIKE NOW*... WHAT I *DID* TO YOU... *TO GET EVEN*...

THE SMALL BAND OF BLACK-CLAD PEOPLE MOVES SILENTLY AWAY AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE SERVICE, AND EZRA STEPS FORWARD...

WHAT YOU GOING TO DO *NOW*, EZRA? YOU CAIN'T BURY THE POOR CRITTER! GROUND'S FROZEN!

HELP ME GET THE COFFIN TO THAT MAUSOLEUM, CLEM! WE'LL STORE IT THERE TILL THE GROUND THAWS!

EZRA AND CLEM CARRY THE COFFIN TO A MAUSOLEUM! THE NAME CARVED ABOVE THE DOOR IN LARGE LETTERS READS... 'DEEPLEY'...

GONNA STORE 'IM IN YOUR *OWN MAUSOLEUM*, EH, EZRA!

YES! THE FAMILY WILL NEVER KNOW! AND IN THE SPRING, WE'LL BURY HIM!

DEEPLEY

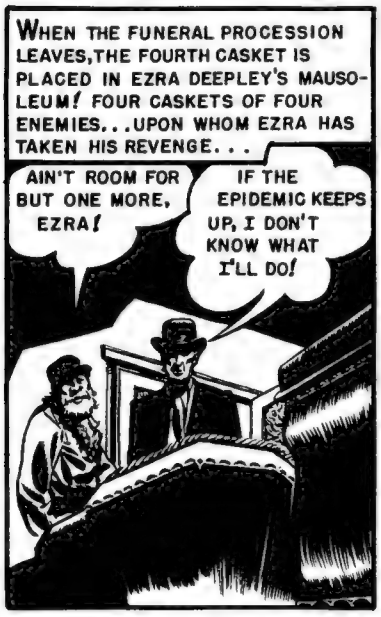
3

THE PHONE IS RINGING AS EZRA ENTERS HIS HOUSE! ANOTHER DEATH... FROM INFLUENZA! THE EPIDEMIC IS GETTING SERIOUS...
WHO? WHO DID YOU SAY...?
THE MAYOR, HIMSELF! FREDRICK DUNHILL!
EZRA'S BRAIN REELS! TWO WITHIN A WEEK! TWO OF HIS MOST HATED ENEMIES! FIRST THE SADISTIC DENTIST, JOHN BRIDGEMAN, AND NOW... NOW, FREDRICK DUNHILL, THE MAYOR... THE POLITICIAN... THE THIEF! EZRA'S THOUGHTS GO BACK... BACK TO THAT FATEFUL DAY...
SORRY, MR. DEEPLEY! THE MAYOR JUST ISSUED IT! A NEW ORDINANCE! YOU'LL HAVE TO MOVE YOUR MORTUARY OUT OF THE TOWN LIMITS!
BUT, HOW CAN I? THIS PROPERTY IS ALL I HAVE! I CAN'T AFFORD TO BUY ANOTHER PLACE!
THAT NIGHT, AS EZRA STANDS OVER THE DEAD MAYOR...
YOU FORCED ME OUT... FORCED ME TO SELL SO THAT I HAD TO MOVE TO THIS RUNDOWN PLACE... FORCED ME TO SELL CHEAP! LATER, I FOUND OUT IT WAS YOUR BROTHER-IN-LAW WHO BOUGHT MY PLACE! AND THE TOWN BOUGHT IT FROM HIM THE NEXT YEAR...
HE SPLIT IT WITH YOU, DIDN'T HE, FREDRICK DUNHILL? YOUR BROTHER-IN-LAW SPLIT THE PROFIT WITH YOU! OVER TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS! YOU CHEAT! YOU LYING POLITICIAN! DIRTY LIES... DIRTY PROMISES! WELL, I'LL SHOW YOU! I'M GOING TO GET EVEN, NOW!
THE NEXT DAY WHEN MAYOR DUNHILL IS BURIED, EZRA AGAIN WATCHES THE PROCEEDINGS...
LUCKY FOR THEM THEY CAN'T SEE YOU, FREDRICK DUNHILL! LUCKY FOR THEM THEY CAN'T SEE HOW I GOT EVEN!
...AND AFTER THE MOURNERS LEAVE...
GONNA PUT HIM WITH THE OTHER, MR. DEEPLEY?
YES, CLEM! C'MON! HELP ME!
SO A SECOND COFFIN IS STORED IN EZRA DEEPLEY'S OWN MAUSOLEUM! STORED TILL THE SPRING THAW WHEN IT CAN BE BURIED...
THIS EPIDEMIC'S GOOD FOR BUSINESS, EH, EZRA?
OH SHUT UP, CLEM!
4

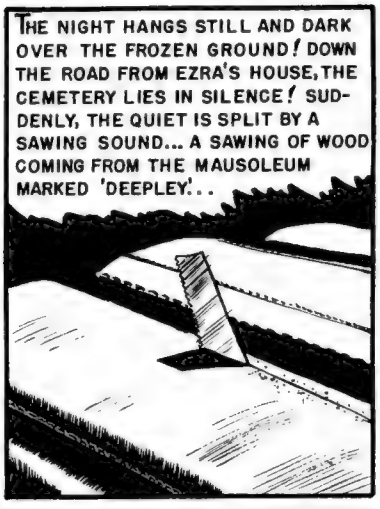
THE THIRD VICTIM OF THE INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC IS HORACE STREETWALL...THE TOWN BANKER! EZRA IS ELATED! THIS IS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE! OLD MONEYBAGS STREETWALL! HOW EZRA HATED HIM! EVER SINCE THE TIME EZRA WENT TO SEE HIM...TO BORROW MONEY...
THE PLACE... IT'S SO RUNDOWN, MR. STREETWALL! I WAS FORCED TO MOVE TO IT... BUT...
YOU WANT TO BORROW MONEY TO ALTER IT, EH, DEEPLEY?
YES, SIR! THE ROOF LEAKS... THE SHINGLES ARE BROKEN AND ROTTED! I...
SORRY, DEEPLEY! YOU'RE A POOR RISK! MY ANSWER IS NO! GOOD DAY!
AND SO...WHEN THE TIME COMES FOR EZRA TO EMBALM HORACE STREETWALL'S BODY...
MONEY, STREETWALL! THAT'S ALL YOU THOUGHT ABOUT! MONEY! MONEY WAS YOUR LIFE...YOUR MIND! WELL, NOW YOUR LIFE IS OVER...AND I... I'M GOING TO GET EVEN...
AFTER THE FUNERAL OF THE TOWN BANKER, A THIRD COFFIN IS STORED IN EZRA DEEPLEY'S MAUSOLEUM...
GROUND'S STILL FROZEN, EH, EZRA?
YES! HMMM! GETTING CROWDED IN HERE!
TWO DAYS LATER... EZRA DEEPLEY HAD A FOURTH CUSTOMER! A FOURTH VICTIM OF THE INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC! THIS TIME HE RECEIVED THE NEWS WITH ECSTATIC JOY! HIS WORST ENEMY...HIS VERY WORST ...CLAUDE FOWLER... THE MAN WHO HAD AMPUTATED EZRA DEEPLEY'S LEG!
DOCTOR FOWLER'S BODY IS BROUGHT TO THE MORTUARY! EZRA LOCKS THE DOOR AFTER THE SOBBING FAMILY LEAVES AND STANDS OVER THE PROSTRATE CORPSE...
BUTCHER! DRUNKEN BUTCHER! REMEMBER ME, DOCTOR FOWLER? REMEMBER EZRA DEEPLEY? THE MAN WHOSE LEG YOU NEEDLESSLY AMPUTATED?
YOU CAME TO THE HOSPITAL DRUNK! I HAD HAD AN ACCIDENT... SEVERELY INJURED MY LEG! YOU AMPUTATED! YOU COULD HAVE SAVED IT...ONLY NO... YOU WERE TOO DRUNK...TOO FULL OF WHISKEY! INSTEAD...YOU BUTCHER...YOU CUT IT OFF! NOW, I'M FORCED TO WEAR AN ARTIFICIAL LEG...SEE?
5

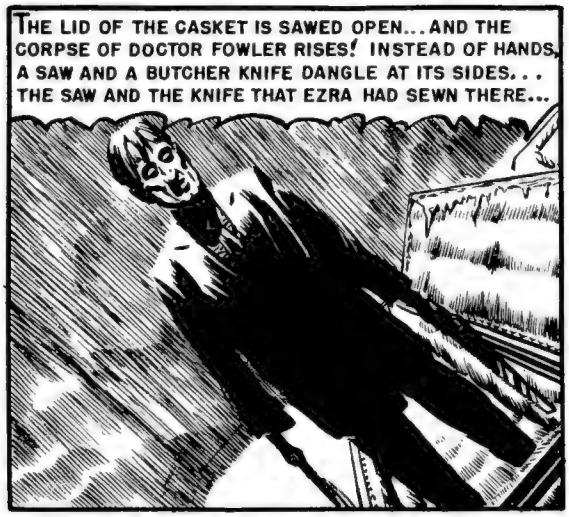
WELL, NOW IT'S MY CHANCE, DOCTOR! MY CHANCE TO GET EVEN... WITH YOU!

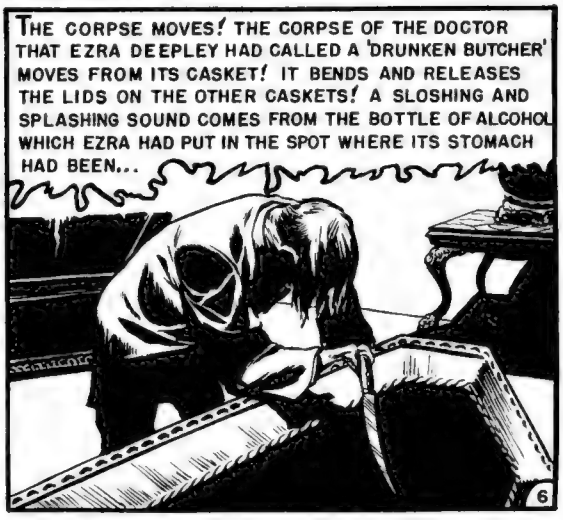
THE NEXT DAY, AS DOCTOR CLAUDE FOWLER'S FUNERAL IS BEING HELD...
TOO BAD, DOCTOR FOWLER! TOO BAD THEY CAN'T SEE YOU AS YOU REALLY ARE... AS I'VE FIXED YOU!


WHEN THE FUNERAL PROCESSION LEAVES, THE FOURTH CASKET IS PLACED IN EZRA DEEPLEY'S MAUSOLEUM! FOUR CASKETS OF FOUR ENEMIES... UPON WHOM EZRA HAS TAKEN HIS REVENGE...
AIN'T ROOM FOR BUT ONE MORE, EZRA!
IF THE EPIDEMIC KEEPS UP, I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'LL DO!

BUT... UNLUCKILY FOR EZRA DEEPLEY, THE INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC SUBSIDES AND THERE ARE NO MORE DEATHS! EZRA SITS, ONE NIGHT, IN HIS MORTUARY... LAUGHING TO HIMSELF...
HEH, HEH! I FIXED THEM... THE FOUR OF THEM! I FIXED THEM GOOD!


THE NIGHT HANGS STILL AND DARK OVER THE FROZEN GROUND! DOWN THE ROAD FROM EZRA'S HOUSE, THE CEMETERY LIES IN SILENCE! SUDDENLY, THE QUIET IS SPLIT BY A SAWING SOUND... A SAWING OF WOOD COMING FROM THE MAUSOLEUM MARKED 'DEEPLEY'...


THE LID OF THE CASKET IS SAWED OPEN... AND THE CORPSE OF DOCTOR FOWLER RISES! INSTEAD OF HANDS, A SAW AND A BUTCHER KNIFE DANGLE AT ITS SIDES... THE SAW AND THE KNIFE THAT EZRA HAD SEWN THERE...


THE CORPSE MOVES! THE CORPSE OF THE DOCTOR THAT EZRA DEEPLEY HAD CALLED A 'DRUNKEN BUTCHER' MOVES FROM ITS CASKET! IT BENDS AND RELEASES THE LIDS ON THE OTHER CASKETS! A SLOSHING AND SPLASHING SOUND COMES FROM THE BOTTLE OF ALCOHOL WHICH EZRA HAD PUT IN THE SPOT WHERE ITS STOMACH HAD BEEN...
6

IT STANDS OVER THE OTHER THREE COFFINS! IT SEEMS TO BE CALLING THE OCCUPANTS...

THE CORPSE OF HORACE STREETWALL RISES SLOWLY! IT SITS UP IN ITS COFFIN! THE PENNIES IN THE SKULL WHERE THE BRAINS SHOULD BE TINKLE AGAINST EACH OTHER! 'MONEY ON HIS MIND,' EZRA HAD SAID ...AND PUT IT THERE...

THE CORPSE OF BANKER STREETWALL GETS SHAKILY TO ITS FEET! A SACK OF PENNIES SWINGS WHERE ITS HEART HAD BEEN... CLINKING AGAINST ITS RIBS...

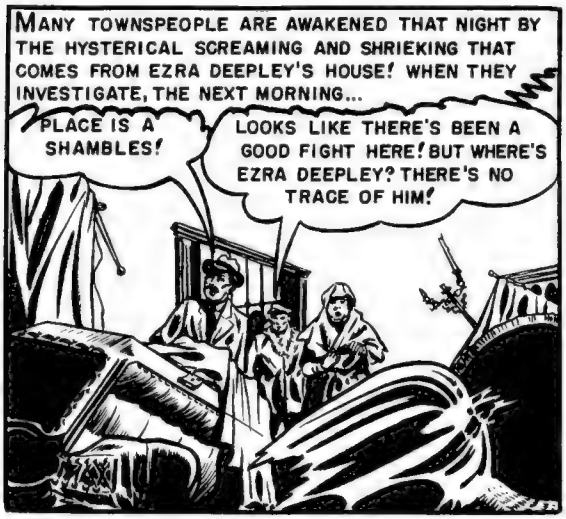
THE BANKER'S CORPSE STANDS BESIDE THE DOCTOR'S...WAITING...

THEN THE CORPSE OF DENTIST JOHN BRIDGEMAN RISES FROM ITS CASKET! IT GRINS A TOOTHLESS GRIN, SHOWING WHERE EZRA DEEPLEY HAD REMOVED ALL OF ITS TEETH! ITS EYES ARE GONE... TORN FROM THEIR SOCKETS! 'NOW, DENTIST BRIDGEMAN HAS *TWO CAVITIES* IN HIS FACE', EZRA HAD SAID...

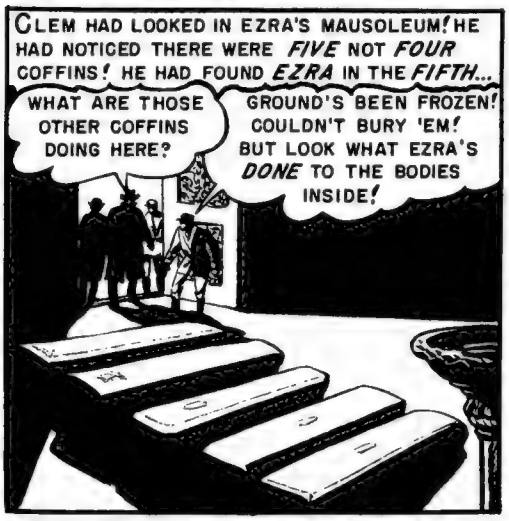
THE THREE MUTILATED CORPSES STAND WAITING AS THE FOURTH CORPSE RISES FROM ITS COFFIN! THE CORPSE OF THE POLITICIAN, FREDRICK DUNHILL...DIRT POURING FROM ITS TONGUELESS MOUTH, BALLOTS STUFFED INTO ITS EARS... GETS TO ITS FEET...

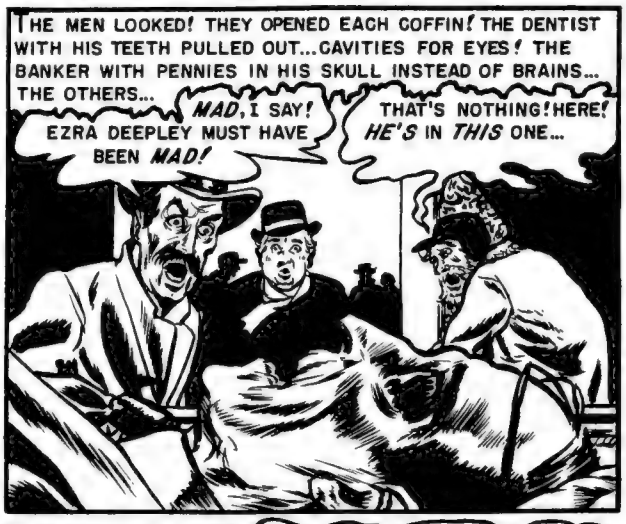
THE COLD MOON SHINES ON THE SNOW-COVERED COUNTRYSIDE! IT ILLUMINATES AN EERIE SIGHT! FOUR DISFIGURED, VIOLATED CORPSES MOVE SLOWLY...STEADILY ...DOWN THE ROAD...TO THE MORTUARY...

7


MANY TOWNSPEOPLE ARE AWAKENED THAT NIGHT BY THE HYSTERICAL SCREAMING AND SHRIEKING THAT COMES FROM EZRA DEEPLEY'S HOUSE! WHEN THEY INVESTIGATE, THE NEXT MORNING...
PLACE IS A SHAMBLES!
LOOKS LIKE THERE'S BEEN A GOOD FIGHT HERE! BUT WHERE'S EZRA DEEPLEY? THERE'S NO TRACE OF HIM!

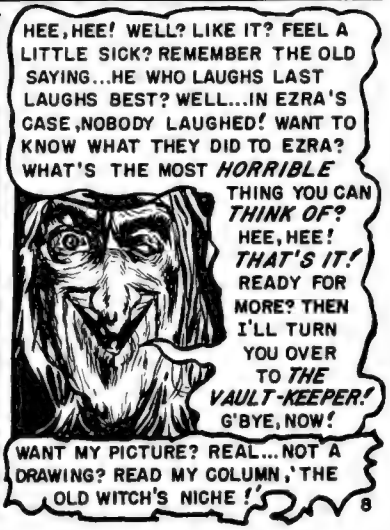
CLEM BODKIN, THE CEMETERY CARETAKER, RUSHES INTO THE MORTUARY! HE IS PALE...HIS EYES WIDE IN TERROR...
COME QUICKLY! I...I FOUND HIM! I MEAN...WHAT'S LEFT OF HIM!
WHERE, CLEM? WHAT HAPPENED?


CLEM HAD LOOKED IN EZRA'S MAUSOLEUM! HE HAD NOTICED THERE WERE FIVE NOT FOUR COFFINS! HE HAD FOUND EZRA IN THE FIFTH...
WHAT ARE THOSE OTHER COFFINS DOING HERE?
GROUND'S BEEN FROZEN! COULDN'T BURY 'EM! BUT LOOK WHAT EZRA'S DONE TO THE BODIES INSIDE!


THE MEN LOOKED! THEY OPENED EACH COFFIN! THE DENTIST WITH HIS TEETH PULLED OUT...CAVITIES FOR EYES! THE BANKER WITH PENNIES IN HIS SKULL INSTEAD OF BRAINS... THE OTHERS...
MAD, I SAY! EZRA DEEPLEY MUST HAVE BEEN MAD!
THAT'S NOTHING! HERE! HE'S IN THIS ONE...

THE MEN CROWDED ABOUT AS CLEM OPENED THE FIFTH COFFIN... EZRA'S...
GOOD LORD!
OUGH-H!
GULP!

HOW...HOW HORRIBLE! BUT HOW...WHO DO YOU SUPPOSE DID THIS TO HIM!
MAYBE... MAYBE THEY DID... IN REVENGE!


HEE, HEE! WELL? LIKE IT? FEEL A LITTLE SICK? REMEMBER THE OLD SAYING...HE WHO LAUGHS LAST LAUGHS BEST? WELL...IN EZRA'S CASE, NOBODY LAUGHED! WANT TO KNOW WHAT THEY DID TO EZRA? WHAT'S THE MOST HORRIBLE THING YOU CAN THINK OF? HEE, HEE! THAT'S IT! READY FOR MORE? THEN I'LL TURN YOU OVER TO THE VAULT-KEEPER! G'BYE, NOW!
WANT MY PICTURE? REAL...NOT A DRAWING? READ MY COLUMN, 'THE OLD WITCH'S NICHE'!
8

THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH. *GREETINGS, GHOULS!* THIS IS YOUR *HOST IN HOWLS*, YOUR *GRUESOME GUIDE* THROUGH *THE CRYPT OF TERROR, THE CRYPT-KEEPER*, READY TO SET SAIL ON ANOTHER *VICIOUS VOYAGE* INTO *VILE VISAGES*. SO HERE GOES WITH *SIDNEY'S OWN TALE*, TOLD IN HIS *VERY OWN WAILING WORDS*. SIDNEY CALLS IT...

MODEL NEPHEW

I STAND ON THE FLAGSTONE PATIO OUTSIDE HIS PALATIAL MANSION, STARING IN AT MY RICH OLD UNCLE SITTING ALONE IN HIS LIBRARY, AND I KNOW WHAT I MUST DO. I CANNOT WAIT ANY LONGER. I AM IN TOO DEEP. I NEED MONEY BADLY. AND, SINCE I AM UNCLE'S ONLY LIVING RELATIVE AND SOLE HEIR TO HIS FORTUNE, THE ONLY WAY I CAN *GET* MONEY, NOW, IMMEDIATELY, IS TO *KILL HIM*. SO I PUSH OPEN THE FRENCH DOORS.

UNCLE STUDIES ME FOR A MOMENT, THEN TURNS BACK TO HIS WORK... TO HIS SHIP MODEL... SMILING...

COME TO ASK FOR *MONEY* AGAIN, SIDNEY? WELL, YOU'LL *NOT GET IT*... NOT *ONE RED CENT*. I'M *SICK* AND *TIRED* OF YOU *PHILANDERING*...
I CAME TO GET IT *ALL* THIS TIME, UNCLE...

UNCLE'S HANDS BEGIN TO SHAKE SO THAT HE DROPS THE TINY MIZZEN MAST HE HOLDS WITH THE LONG SLENDER TWEEZERS...

YOU'LL *GET* IT ALL, SIDNEY... WHEN I'M *DEAD!* BUT NOT *ONE MINUTE BEFORE...*

I *KNOW*, UNCLE...

HE TURNS TO ME, AND THERE IS A FEAR IN HIS OLD EYES... THE FEAR OF A MAN WHO HAS SUDDENLY REALIZED THAT HE IS FACE TO FACE WITH DEATH. I MOVE TOWARD HIM...

YOU *WOULDN'T...*

OH, *WOULDN'T I*, UNCLE...?

HIS JAW DROPS OPEN, AND HE STARTS TO CRY OUT. I CLAP MY HAND OVER HIS MOUTH... HIS NOSE... CUTTING OFF HIS AIR...

DON'T STRUGGLE, UNCLE. IT WILL *ALL BE OVER* IN A *MOMENT...*

G-G-G-GH...

I WATCH AS UNCLE'S FACE TURNS RED... THEN BLUE... AND HIS EYES FAIRLY POP FROM HIS HEAD AS THE LAST DROP OF OXYGEN IN HIS BLOODSTREAM IS ABSORBED...

SUFFOCATION CAN LOOK *SO MUCH* LIKE A *HEART ATTACK*, UNCLE! ONE CAN *RARELY* TELL THE *DIFFERENCE... ESPECIALLY* IN AN *AGED PERSON...*

UNCLE STIFFENS AS HIS LIFE EBBS AND DISSOLVES. AS HE DIES, HE SWINGS HIS ARMS BEFORE HIM, SWEEPING THE BOTTLE CONTAINING THE SHIP MODEL HE'D BEEN WORKING ON FROM HIS DESK...

DRAT IT...

THE BOTTLE SMASHES INTO A THOUSAND JAGGED FRAGMENTS WITH A SPLITTING CRASH, AND THE TINY SHIP SPLINTERS INTO A SMALL PILE OF STRING AND TOOTHPICKS AND BALSA WOOD...

THAT'S *SURE* TO BRING THE *SERVANTS*. I'VE GOT TO GET *OUT* OF HERE.

I RELEASE MY UNCLE'S LIFELESS BODY, AND I DART FROM THE LIBRARY, OUT OF THE FRENCH DOORS, CLOSING THEM BEHIND ME. FROM A SAFE HIDING PLACE AMONG THE BUSHES BEYOND THE PATIO, I WATCH THE SERVANT ENTER AND STAND DUMBFOUNDED AS HE VIEWS UNCLE'S CORPSE...

2

A FEW DAYS LATER, AT THE LAWYER'S OFFICE, MY LATE UNCLE'S WILL IS READ, AND I LISTEN TO THE WORDS THAT MAKE ME A WEALTHY MAN...

...AND SO, TO MY *NEPHEW SIDNEY,* I LEAVE MY *ENTIRE ESTATE,* SAVE THOSE POSSESSIONS THAT ARE *NEAR* AND *DEAR* TO ME...MY *OLD SEA CAPTAIN'S UNIFORM* AND MY COLLECTION OF *SHIPS-IN-BOTTLES. THESE,* I REQUEST, BE *INTERRED* WITH MY *BONES*...

UNCLE'D MADE HIS FORTUNE WITH SHIPS. HE'D STARTED AS A SAILOR, WORKED HIS WAY UP TO SHIP'S CAPTAIN, AND EVENTUALLY BOUGHT HIS OWN FREIGHTER. FROM THERE, A WHOLE SHIPPING LINE HAD GROWN. WHEN UNCLE RETIRED, HE'D SOLD EVERYTHING. BUT HE NEVER COULD FORGET THE SEA ENTIRELY. I REMEMBER, AS A BOY, HIS TELLING ME STORIES OF HIS SEA ADVENTURES...

SHE WAS THE *SWEETEST* FOUR-MASTER THAT *EVER SAILED THE SEA,* SIDNEY.

AND THIS IS WHAT SHE *LOOKED* LIKE, UNCLE?

YEP, SIDNEY. *THAT'S HER*...EVERY *SPAR* AND *LANYARD. MADE* THAT MODEL *MYSELF.*

HOW'D YOU GET IT *IN THE BOTTLE,* UNCLE?

HEH, HEH. THAT'S A *SECRET,* BOY! A *SECRET.*

AW, *I DON'T CARE, ANYWAY!*

BUT I *DID* CARE. I REMEMBER STEALING TO THE LIBRARY ONE NIGHT AND WATCHING, FASCINATED, AS UNCLE CAREFULLY FITTED THE TINY SECTIONS OF HIS SHIP MODELS IN THROUGH THE NARROW NECK OF THE BOTTLE AND GLUED THEM INTO PLACE...

AND AS I GREW INTO MATURITY, AND I DISCOVERED HOBBIES OF MY OWN...CARS, AND WOMEN, AND HORSE RACES...THINGS THAT REQUIRED MONEY... I REMEMBER COMING TO MY UNCLE, AND BEGGING FOR A HANDOUT, AND HIM WORKING ON THOSE MISERABLE SHIP MODELS...

UNCLE, I...

SH-H-H-H! NOT NOW! THIS IS A TICKLISH PART...

BUT NOW ALL THAT IS OVER. I WILL NEVER HAVE TO BEG FOR ANOTHER CENT. IT IS ALL MINE...EVERYTHING. THE LAWYER, READING THE WILL, TELLS ME THAT...

...AND THAT I BE PLACED IN THE MAUSOLEUM I HAVE BUILT FOR MYSELF IN FAIRHAVEN CEMETERY, ALONG WITH THESE NEAR AND DEAR POSSESSIONS...

GOOD RIDDANCE...

3

THE FUNERAL IS A SIMPLE AFFAIR. I HAVE SEEN TO THAT. AFTER ALL, WHY WASTE MONEY ON THE DEAD OLD GOAT? BUT I HAVE TO KEEP MYSELF FROM LAUGHING AS THE SERVANTS FILE INTO THE MAUSOLEUM AND PLACE HIS STUPID SHIP MODELS BESIDE HIS COFFIN...

ASHES TO ASHES... DUST TO DUST...

...AND DRAPE HIS MOTH-EATEN OLD UNIFORM AND CAP OVER THE SILENT SOMBER COFFIN...

AS SOON AS MY LATE UNCLE'S AFFAIRS ARE PUT IN ORDER AND HIS ESTATE IS TURNED OVER TO ME, I GO ON A WILD SPENDING BINGE...NO HOLDS BARRED. I GET RID OF ALL MY INHIBITIONS IN ONE MAD CONTINUOUS SPREE OF WINE, WOMEN, AND SONG...

ONE NIGHT, RETURNING HOME FROM MY LATEST FUN-SEEKING ESCAPADE, I FIND MYSELF DOWN BY THE WATER-FRONT, A LITTLE HIGH, WALKING DOWN A DESERTED, WINDING, FOG-BLANKETED, COBBLESTONED STREET. AS I STAGGER ALONG, I HEAR A VOICE...

SIDNEY! I'VE BEEN *LOOKING* FOR YOU!

HUH?

A FIGURE STANDS BEFORE ME, SILHOUETTED IN THE HAZY LIGHT FROM A DISTANT STREET LAMP...A FIGURE IN A SEA-CAPTAIN'S UNIFORM...

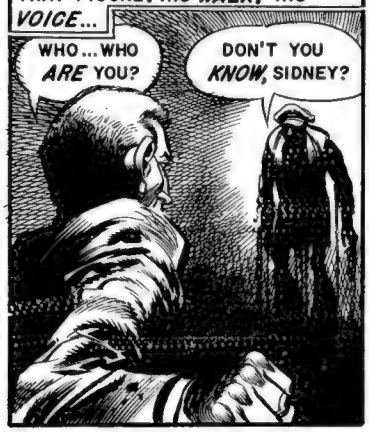
COME, SIDNEY! I NEED A *CREW*. MY SHIP IS *WAITING*. *COME*...

WHO...WHO *IS* IT?

4

I TRY TO PEER INTO THE GLOOM, TO MAKE OUT THE FEATURES OF THE STOOPED FIGURE STANDING BEFORE ME, BUT THE LIQUOR I HAVE CONSUMED DULLS MY SENSES...

HE COMES TOWARD ME, SHAMBLING OVER THE COBBLESTONES. SUDDENLY AN ICY FEAR GRIPS MY HEART. THERE IS SOMETHING *FAMILIAR* ABOUT THAT FIGURE. HIS *WALK*, HIS *VOICE*...



I BEGIN TO RUN. I AM TERRORIZED. MY HEART BEATS IN MY CHEST LIKE A TRIP-HAMMER RUN WILD. HE STUMBLES AFTER ME...

I RUN THROUGH THE DESERTED WATERFRONT ALLEYS, THE PERSPIRATION POURING FROM MY FACE. BUT NO MATTER HOW FAST I RUN, THE SHUFFLING FIGURE BEHIND GAINS ON ME. AND THEN, SUDDENLY, THE ROAD ENDS. I HAVE RUN OUT ONTO A PIER...

HE IS ALMOST UPON ME. I STAND, FROZEN, BENEATH THE DIM LAMP AT THE PIER'S END. AND THEN I SMELL IT...THE ODOR...THE ODOR OF DRIFTWOOD AND ROTTING SEAWEED...THE VILE AND NAUSEATING STENCH OF DECAY...

HE REACHES OUT TO ME, AND I INHALE THE FOULNESS OF HIS AURA, THE PUTRID REEK OF HIS FETOR. AND THEN THE LIGHT ABOVE US FALLS UPON HIS FACE...

THE FOG CLOSES IN ABOUT ME...FIRST GREY, THEN BLACK... AND I SLIP INTO THE MERCIFUL ESCAPE OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS, FALLING TO THE ROTTED BRINE-IMPREGNATED PIER BOARDS...

THE SOUND OF THE SEA AWAKENS ME. IT IS A HOLLOW ROARING SOUND, LIKE THE SOUND YOU HEAR WHEN YOU PLACE A SEASHELL TO YOUR EAR. I STIR, SIT UP, AND LOOK ABOUT ME...

GOOD LORD! I'M ON A SHIP!

THE SKY ABOVE ME AS BLACK AS TAR, AND AN INKY, GREEN SEA, CALM AND STILL, STRETCHES AWAY TOWARD IT. I STAND ON THE DECK, AND I CALL...

YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE ME BACK! HELP ME... SOMEBODY. YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE ME BACK TO LAND! I'LL PAY...I'LL PAY ANYTHING!

I LISTEN. NO SOUND. ONLY THE EMPTY FARAWAY ROAR... ECHOING. I STAGGER ACROSS THE DECK TO THE CABIN DOOR, SCREAMING...

ANYBODY ON BOARD? ANYBODY?

I PULL AT THE DOOR LATCH. THE DOOR STICKS FAST. AND THEN I SEE THAT IT'S NO DOOR AT ALL, BUT MERELY A DOOR PAINTED ON THE CABIN WALL...

WHAT IS THIS? WHAT KIND OF SHIP IS THIS?

I PEER INTO THE BLACK PORTHOLES...

ANYBODY IN THERE?

AND THEN I REALIZE THAT THEY ARE MERELY BLACK CIRCLES PAINTED TO RESEMBLE PORTHOLES...

GOOD LORD!

I AM ALONE... ALONE ON A DERELICT SHIP... A SHIP FLOATING IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE... WITH FAKE CABINS AND PAINTED PORTHOLES AND DUMMY DOORS. OH, GOD... SAVE ME!

6

MY CRIES OF ANGUISH DRIFT INTO THE NIGHT, AND THEIR ECHOES COME BACK, TAUNTING, LAUGHING AT ME. FRANTICALLY, I PEER OUT ACROSS THE STILL SEA TO THE GLOW IN THE EAST THAT IS THE COMING DAWN...

DAYLIGHT! PERHAPS... *PERHAPS...*

AND THEN I SEE THAT THE OCEAN BELOW ME DOES NOT MOVE. ITS CALM SWELLS HANG FROZEN, PARALYZED, A MOTIONLESS MASS THAT STRETCHES AWAY SILENTLY TO THE...THE...

THE *HORIZON!* IT'S ONLY A *SHORT DISTANCE AWAY!*

SUDDENLY MY BLOOD FREEZES. I SWING DOWN THE SHIP'S SIDE, BURNING MY HANDS AS I SLIDE DOWN THE HEAVY ROPE...

OH, LORD! *NO! NO!*

...I DASH MADLY ACROSS THE SOLID SEA, STAMPING OVER THE FROZEN WAVES...

IT *CAN'T* BE...

AND I REACH THE WALL...THE WALL OF GLASS THAT RISES UPWARD AROUND AND OVER MY DERELICT SHIP AND DOWN TO THE DISTANT OPPOSITE HORIZON...

GLASS! IT'S GLASS! OH, GOD...

I STARE OUT OF MY BOTTLE PRISON AT THE DISTANT COFFIN LOOMING IN THE DAWN LIGHT FILTERING THROUGH THE MAUSOLEUM WINDOW. AND I SEE THE STILL-DAMP CAPTAIN'S UNIFORM DRAPED UPON IT...STILL DAMP FROM THE FOG OF THE NIGHT BEFORE. AND I KNOW THAT I AM DOOMED...DOOMED TO SPEND ETERNITY ON THE DECKS OF THIS SHAM VESSEL...THIS SHIP-IN-A-BOTTLE FOREVER LOCKED BESIDE ITS MAKER'S BIER...

CHOKE...

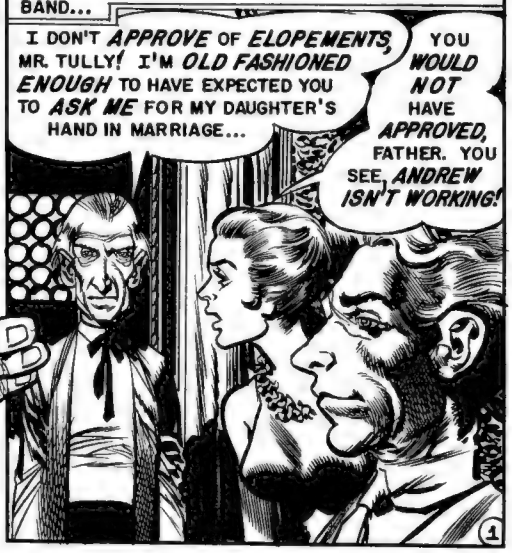
HEH, HEH. WELL, *HIDIOTS!* THAT ABOUT CORKS UP *O.W.'S MORBID MESS-MAG* FOR THIS ISSUE. WE'LL ALL SEE YOU NEXT IN *MY* HUMBLE HORROR HEDITION OF *TALES FROM THE CRYPT.* IN THE MEANTIME, IF YOU WANT TO MEET *MORE FIENDS* LIKE *YOURSELF,* CORRESPOND WITH *OTHER CREEPS,* WEAR *PINS* AND *PATCHES,* CARRY *IDENTIFICATION CARDS,* FRAME *CERTIFICATES,* AND GENERALLY *ACT THE FOOL,* THEN JOIN *THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB!* IF YOU WANT TO *REMAIN REASONABLY SANE, DON'T DO IT!* 'BYE, NOW.

THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH! AND NOW IT'S TIME FOR YOUR *CRYPT-KEEPER, HOST* OF THE *CRYPT OF TERROR,* TO SERVE *DESSERT* IN THIS *MORBID FOUR-COARSE MOLD-MEAL,* AND *WIND-UP FEASTIVITIES* FOR *THE OLD WITCH'S MUCK-MAG.* SO CRAWL INTO THE *CREEPY CAVERNS* OF *CADAVEROUS CAVORTINGS* AND SUFFER A *COFFIN SPELL* AS I NARRATE THIS *NAUSEATING NOVELETTE* OF *ECCENTRIC EMBALMING.* IT'S A FAVORITE OF MINE CALLED. . .

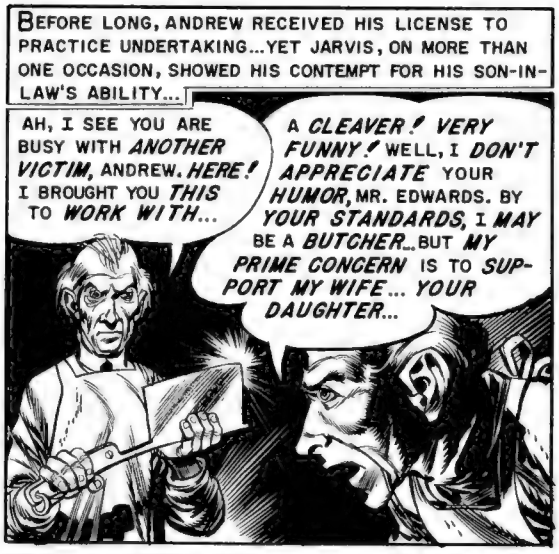
A WORK OF ART!

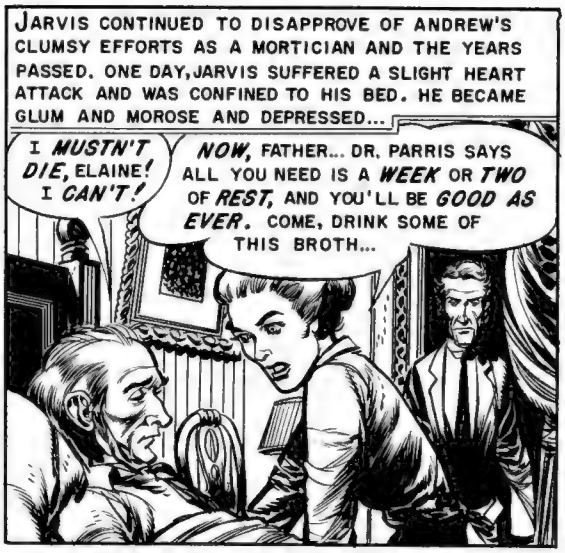
THE AIR OF JARVIS EDWARDS' LABORATORY WAS HEAVY WITH THE SHARP SUFFOCATING ODOR OF FORMALDEHYDE. THE YEARS SHOWED THEMSELVES ON THE AGING MORTICIAN... HIS NEARLY HAIRLESS HEAD...THE TREMBLING OF HIS VEINED HANDS. YET JARVIS EDWARDS WORKED WITH SUCH DEFT, BORE HIMSELF WITH SUCH DIGNITY, THAT THE CORPSE ON THE WHITE MARBLE TABLE LOOKED, AS THEY SAY, SO NATURAL... AS IF IN PEACEFUL SLUMBER. FOR THIS WAS JARVIS EDWARDS' PRIDE... A DEEP PRIDE IN HIS ART. AND WHEN HE'D FINISHED THE JOB, HE TURNED WITH THAT SAME PRIDE AND DIGNITY TO FACE HIS DAUGHTER, ELAINE, AND HER NEW HUSBAND...


I DON'T *APPROVE* OF *ELOPEMENTS,* MR. TULLY! I'M *OLD FASHIONED ENOUGH* TO HAVE EXPECTED YOU TO *ASK ME* FOR MY DAUGHTER'S HAND IN MARRIAGE...
YOU *WOULD NOT* HAVE *APPROVED,* FATHER. YOU SEE, *ANDREW ISN'T WORKING!*
1

JARVIS EDWARDS DREW HIMSELF UP TO THE FULL LENGTH OF HIS CADAVEROUS FIGURE. HIS JAW WORKED AS, FOR A MOMENT, HE STOOD IN STONY SILENCE. AT LAST, WITH AN OBVIOUS EFFORT AT SELF-CONTROL, HE ADDRESSED HIS NEW SON-IN-LAW...
YOU...YOU HAVE NO JOB, MR. TULLY!? THEN JUST HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO SUPPORT YOUR WIFE?
IF YOU'D HELP ME, SIR, I'D LIKE TO BE AN UNDERTAKER! ELAINE SAYS THERE'S LOTS OF MONEY IN IT...
ANDREW TULLY HAD TOUCHED A TENDER SORE SPOT OF JARVIS EDWARDS' LIFE...
UNDERTAKER, INDEED! I FORBID YOU TO USE THAT WORD IN THIS HOUSE! I, MR. TULLY, AM A MORTICIAN! AND I AM ONE OF THE FEW MEMBERS OF MY PROFESSION WORTHY OF THE NAME! THE REST ARE BUTCHERS!
I MEANT NO OFFENSE, SIR...
YES, BUTCHERS! MONEY! THAT'S ALL THEY'RE INTERESTED IN! WHAT ABOUT PRIDE IN YOUR WORK, YOUNG MAN? WHAT ABOUT LOVE OF A FINE ART? EMBALMING IS A FINE ART, MR. TULLY...
I'M WILLING TO LEARN, MR. EDWARDS! I'LL WORK HARD...
LET'S FACE IT, FATHER! YOU NEED ME TO LOOK AFTER YOU, AND ANDREW NEEDS A PROFESSION! TEACH HIM EMBALMING, AND WE'LL STAY HERE...LIVE WITH YOU...AND I CAN GO ON KEEPING HOUSE FOR YOU.
THE OLD MAN CONSIDERED FOR A MOMENT, THEN SHRUGGED. HIS FACE ASSUMED AN AIR OF HELPLESS RESIGNATION...
YES, I DO NEED YOU, ELAINE! ALL RIGHT... I'LL TEACH YOUR NEW HUSBAND MY ART. I ONLY HOPE AND PRAY HE'LL NOT BECOME ONE OF THOSE BUTCHERS!
THANK YOU, FATHER!
AND SO YOUNG, AMBITIOUS ANDREW TULLY BECAME JARVIS'S PUPIL...
BUT...GASP...YOU'RE REMOVING ALL OF THE VITAL ORGANS, MR. EDWARDS! I THOUGHT THAT ONLY THE BLOOD IS REPLACED WITH FORMALDEHYDE!
I TOLD YOU, ANDREW...WHEN I EMBALM A BODY, IT IS A WORK OF ART! IT WAS AN ART WITH THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS... AND THEY REMOVED THE VITAL ORGANS!
IT SEEMS LIKE SUCH A WASTE OF TIME, MR. EDWARDS. AFTER ALL, WHEN A MAN IS DEAD, HE'S DEAD! AND WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE IF IT TAKES A LITTLE LONGER FOR HIM TO ROT IN HIS GRAVE? WHY, YOU COULD DO THREE BODIES IN THE TIME IT TAKES YOU TO DO THIS ONE!
I JUST CAN'T SEEM TO MAKE YOU UNDERSTAND...
2

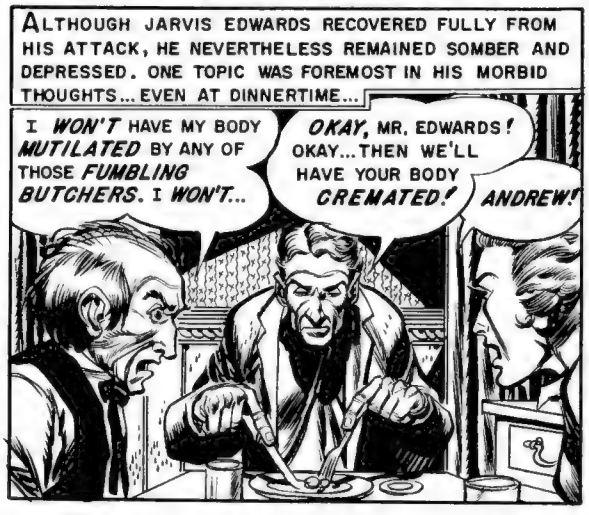
THOUGH THEY STOOD AT OPPOSITE ENDS OF THE POLE WHERE EMBALMING WAS CONCERNED, ANDREW TULLY TRIED HARD TO LEARN ALL THAT HIS STUBBORN FATHER-IN-LAW TAUGHT HIM. AND, AT LAST, THE YOUNG MAN WAS GIVEN A CADAVER OF HIS OWN...
NO! NO! ANDREW, THAT'S NOT THE WAY I SHOWED YOU TO HOLD A SCAPEL! UGH! IT GRATES ME TO SEE SUCH CRUDENESS...
OH, SO WHAT!? WHO'LL SEE THE INCISIONS ANYWAY?!
I'LL SEE THEM... AND YOU'LL SEE THEM. IT'S A QUESTION OF PROFESSIONAL PRIDE! A NEAT INCISION SHOULD BE...
I KNOW... A WORK OF ART! WELL, I'M NOT INTERESTED IN ART! I HAVE TO EARN A LIVING!
OFTEN DURING HIS MONTHS OF APPRENTICESHIP, ANDREW WOULD RETURN TO THE APARTMENT OVER THE MORTUARY, AND HE'D COMPLAIN TO ELAINE...
I TELL YOU IT'S CRAZY OPERATING ON DEAD PEOPLE, ELAINE! I CAN'T SEEM TO GET MY HANDS SCRUBBED ENOUGH! IT SICKENS ME! NOR CAN I FIGURE OUT WHAT YOUR FATHER HAS AGAINST MAKING MONEY!
FATHER IS HIGHLY RESPECTED IN HIS FIELD, ANDREW!
HE CALLS THEM ALL "BUTCHERS"! HE THINKS I'M ONE, TOO! WELL, I JUST BELIEVE IN MAKING A CORPSE PRESENTABLE ENOUGH FOR THE MOURNERS TO TAKE THEIR LAST LOOK AT IT, AND...
YOU'RE AT LIBERTY TO FIND EMPLOYMENT WITH ANY OTHER MORTICIAN WHO'LL HAVE YOU IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT HERE, ANDREW!
JARVIS EDWARDS STOOD IN THE DOORWAY, GRIM-FACED. ANDREW FLUSHED WITH EMBARRASSMENT...
I'M SORRY, SIR! I DIDN'T SEE YOU STANDING THERE! BELIEVE ME, THERE'S NO MAN I'D RATHER WORK FOR! IT'S JUST THAT THERE'S SO MUCH MONEY TO BE MADE IF YOU'D ONLY...
...BURY THEM FAST...RAKE IN THE PROFITS... QUICK JOBS... EH, ANDREW? WELL, I DON'T HAVE IT IN ME! PEOPLE AREN'T CATTLE! HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF...
I WOULDN'T FEEL ANYTHING! I'D BE DEAD! I WOULDN'T CARE HOW THEY BURIED ME!
I KNEW IT! YOU'VE GOT THE SOUL OF A BUTCHER!
STOP IT... BOTH OF YOU! MUST YOU BE ALWAYS BICKERING?
3

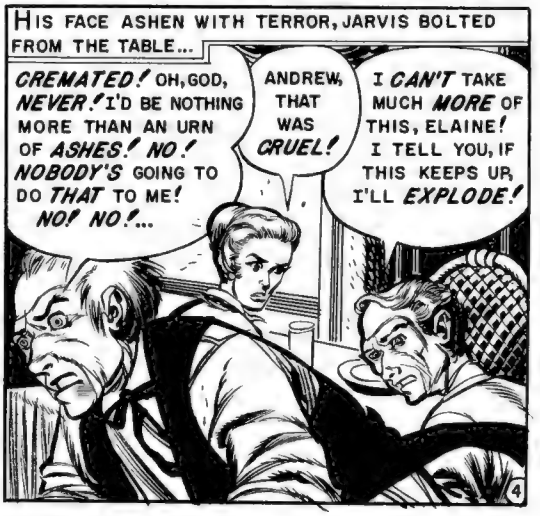

BEFORE LONG, ANDREW RECEIVED HIS LICENSE TO PRACTICE UNDERTAKING...YET JARVIS, ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION, SHOWED HIS CONTEMPT FOR HIS SON-IN-LAW'S ABILITY...
AH, I SEE YOU ARE BUSY WITH ANOTHER VICTIM, ANDREW. HERE! I BROUGHT YOU THIS TO WORK WITH...
A CLEAVER! VERY FUNNY! WELL, I DON'T APPRECIATE YOUR HUMOR, MR. EDWARDS. BY YOUR STANDARDS, I MAY BE A BUTCHER...BUT MY PRIME CONCERN IS TO SUPPORT MY WIFE... YOUR DAUGHTER...

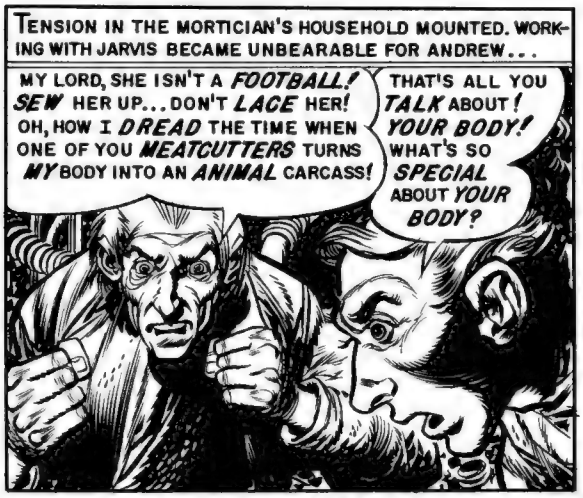

JARVIS CONTINUED TO DISAPPROVE OF ANDREW'S CLUMSY EFFORTS AS A MORTICIAN AND THE YEARS PASSED. ONE DAY, JARVIS SUFFERED A SLIGHT HEART ATTACK AND WAS CONFINED TO HIS BED. HE BECAME GLUM AND MOROSE AND DEPRESSED...
I MUSTN'T DIE, ELAINE! I CAN'T!
NOW, FATHER... DR. PARRIS SAYS ALL YOU NEED IS A WEEK OR TWO OF REST, AND YOU'LL BE GOOD AS EVER. COME, DRINK SOME OF THIS BROTH...

JARVIS EDWARDS STARED OFF INTO SPACE...
I'LL BE ALL RIGHT THIS TIME, YES_ BUT IN A FEW MONTHS... A YEAR, PERHAPS... I'LL HAVE ANOTHER ATTACK... A FATAL ONE! THEN...CHOKE... WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO MY BODY? WHO'LL BE MY MORTICIAN?
THERE, NOW AREN'T YOU GLAD YOU TAUGHT ME, MR. EDWARDS? WHY, I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU!

SUDDENLY, JARVIS'S EYES FILLED WITH HORROR...
NO! NO! YOU'VE GOT TO PROMISE ME, ELAINE... PROMISE ME YOU WON'T LET ANDREW EMBALM ME! DON'T LET HIM LAY A HAND ON ME! PROMISE ME! PROMISE!
ALL RIGHT, FATHER! I PROMISE! CALM YOURSELF! DR. PARRIS WARNED YOU AGAINST BECOMING EXCITED...

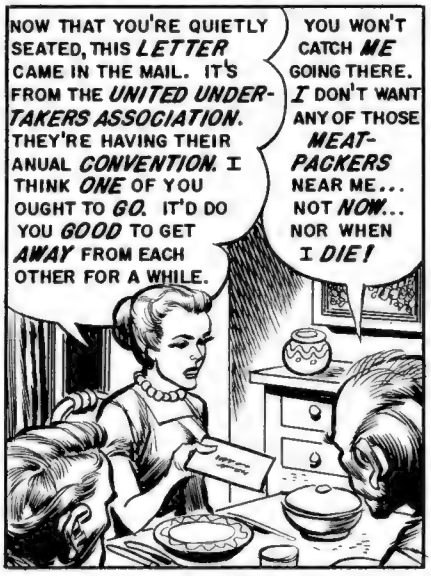

ALTHOUGH JARVIS EDWARDS RECOVERED FULLY FROM HIS ATTACK, HE NEVERTHELESS REMAINED SOMBER AND DEPRESSED. ONE TOPIC WAS FOREMOST IN HIS MORBID THOUGHTS... EVEN AT DINNERTIME...
I WON'T HAVE MY BODY MUTILATED BY ANY OF THOSE FUMBLING BUTCHERS. I WON'T...
OKAY, MR. EDWARDS! OKAY...THEN WE'LL HAVE YOUR BODY CREMATED!
ANDREW!

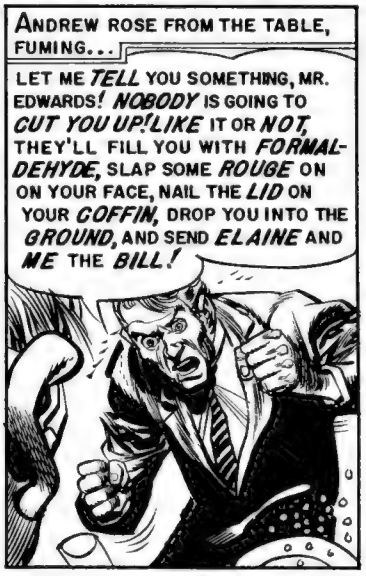

HIS FACE ASHEN WITH TERROR, JARVIS BOLTED FROM THE TABLE...
CREMATED! OH, GOD, NEVER! I'D BE NOTHING MORE THAN AN URN OF ASHES! NO! NOBODY'S GOING TO DO THAT TO ME! NO! NO!...
ANDREW, THAT WAS CRUEL!
I CAN'T TAKE MUCH MORE OF THIS, ELAINE! I TELL YOU, IF THIS KEEPS UP, I'LL EXPLODE!
4

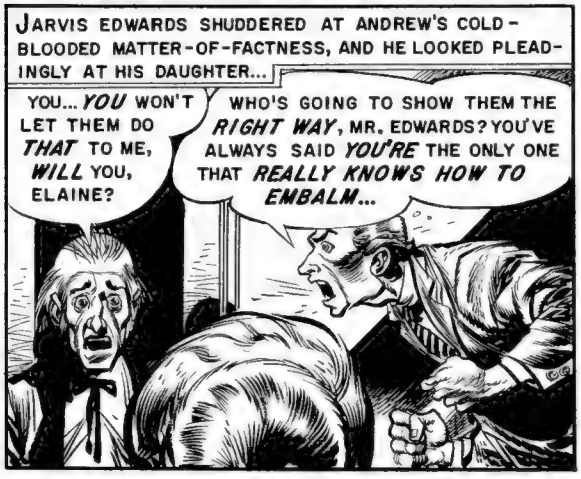

TENSION IN THE MORTICIAN'S HOUSEHOLD MOUNTED. WORKING WITH JARVIS BECAME UNBEARABLE FOR ANDREW...
MY LORD, SHE ISN'T A FOOTBALL! SEW HER UP... DON'T LACE HER! OH, HOW I DREAD THE TIME WHEN ONE OF YOU MEATCUTTERS TURNS MY BODY INTO AN ANIMAL CARCASS!
THAT'S ALL YOU TALK ABOUT! YOUR BODY! WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT YOUR BODY?

LISTEN, ANDREW! ALL THROUGH LIFE, MAN SUFFERS INDIGNITIES. AT LEAST, IN DEATH, HE DESERVES THE SIMPLE MARK OF RESPECT... A DECENT EMBALMING.
THAT'S LIKE GIVING HIM FLOWERS AT HIS FUNERAL! WHY? HE CAN'T SMELL THEM!

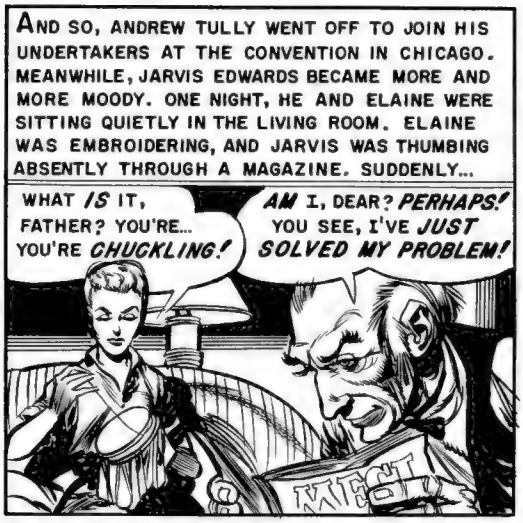
USUALLY IT WAS ELAINE WHO PREVENTED A VIOLENT ARGUMENT FROM DEVELOPING BETWEEN HER HUSBAND AND FATHER...
ARE YOU TWO STILL AT IT DOWN THERE? FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, STOP THE NONSENSE AND COME UP FOR DINNER!

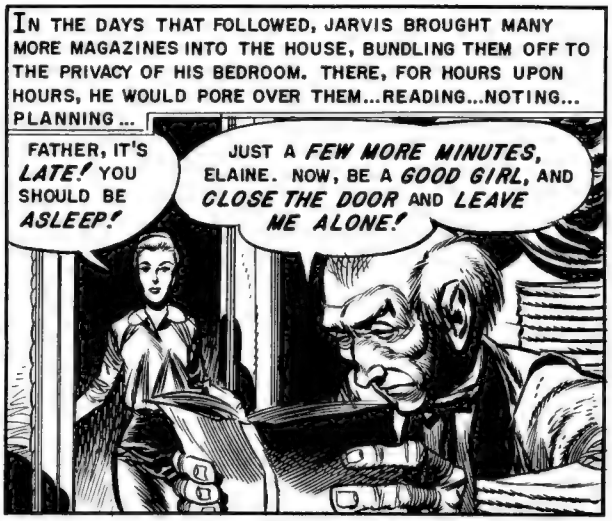

NOW THAT YOU'RE QUIETLY SEATED, THIS LETTER CAME IN THE MAIL. IT'S FROM THE UNITED UNDERTAKERS ASSOCIATION. THEY'RE HAVING THEIR ANUAL CONVENTION. I THINK ONE OF YOU OUGHT TO GO. IT'D DO YOU GOOD TO GET AWAY FROM EACH OTHER FOR A WHILE.
YOU WON'T CATCH ME GOING THERE. I DON'T WANT ANY OF THOSE MEAT-PACKERS NEAR ME... NOT NOW... NOR WHEN I DIE!

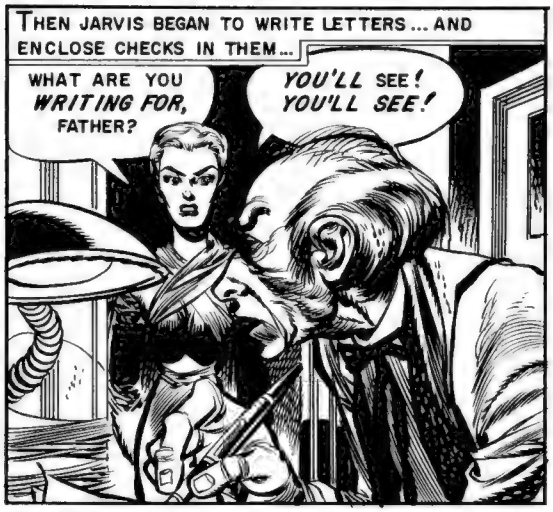

ANDREW ROSE FROM THE TABLE, FUMING...
LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING, MR. EDWARDS! NOBODY IS GOING TO CUT YOU UP! LIKE IT OR NOT, THEY'LL FILL YOU WITH FORMALDEHYDE, SLAP SOME ROUGE ON ON YOUR FACE, NAIL THE LID ON YOUR COFFIN, DROP YOU INTO THE GROUND, AND SEND ELAINE AND ME THE BILL!

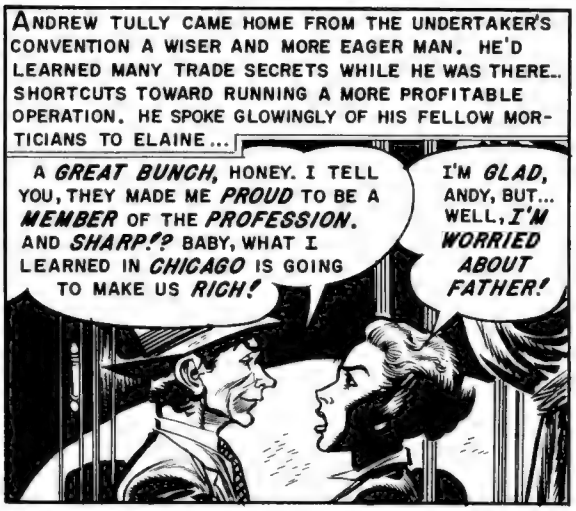

JARVIS EDWARDS SHUDDERED AT ANDREW'S COLD-BLOODED MATTER-OF-FACTNESS, AND HE LOOKED PLEADINGLY AT HIS DAUGHTER...
YOU... YOU WON'T LET THEM DO THAT TO ME, WILL YOU, ELAINE?
WHO'S GOING TO SHOW THEM THE RIGHT WAY, MR. EDWARDS? YOU'VE ALWAYS SAID YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE THAT REALLY KNOWS HOW TO EMBALM...

ELAINE BROKE IN ANGRILY...
STOP IT! BOTH OF YOU! STOP...
ELAINE, YOU'RE RIGHT! I'VE GOT TO GET AWAY. I'LL GO TO THAT UNDERTAKER'S CONVENTION!
5


AND SO, ANDREW TULLY WENT OFF TO JOIN HIS UNDERTAKERS AT THE CONVENTION IN CHICAGO. MEANWHILE, JARVIS EDWARDS BECAME MORE AND MORE MOODY. ONE NIGHT, HE AND ELAINE WERE SITTING QUIETLY IN THE LIVING ROOM. ELAINE WAS EMBROIDERING, AND JARVIS WAS THUMBING ABSENTLY THROUGH A MAGAZINE. SUDDENLY...
WHAT IS IT, FATHER? YOU'RE... YOU'RE CHUCKLING!
AM I, DEAR? PERHAPS! YOU SEE, I'VE JUST SOLVED MY PROBLEM!


IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, JARVIS BROUGHT MANY MORE MAGAZINES INTO THE HOUSE, BUNDLING THEM OFF TO THE PRIVACY OF HIS BEDROOM. THERE, FOR HOURS UPON HOURS, HE WOULD PORE OVER THEM...READING...NOTING... PLANNING...
FATHER, IT'S LATE! YOU SHOULD BE ASLEEP!
JUST A FEW MORE MINUTES, ELAINE. NOW, BE A GOOD GIRL, AND CLOSE THE DOOR AND LEAVE ME ALONE!


THEN JARVIS BEGAN TO WRITE LETTERS... AND ENCLOSE CHECKS IN THEM...
WHAT ARE YOU WRITING FOR, FATHER?
YOU'LL SEE! YOU'LL SEE!


ANDREW TULLY CAME HOME FROM THE UNDERTAKER'S CONVENTION A WISER AND MORE EAGER MAN. HE'D LEARNED MANY TRADE SECRETS WHILE HE WAS THERE.. SHORTCUTS TOWARD RUNNING A MORE PROFITABLE OPERATION. HE SPOKE GLOWINGLY OF HIS FELLOW MORTICIANS TO ELAINE...
A GREAT BUNCH, HONEY. I TELL YOU, THEY MADE ME PROUD TO BE A MEMBER OF THE PROFESSION. AND SHARP!? BABY, WHAT I LEARNED IN CHICAGO IS GOING TO MAKE US RICH!
I'M GLAD, ANDY, BUT... WELL, I'M WORRIED ABOUT FATHER!

OH? STILL GRIPING ABOUT WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO HIM AFTER HE DIES?
HE'S BEEN ORDERING THINGS...THINGS IN MAGAZINES. I WOULDN'T HAVE THOUGHT ANYTHING ABOUT IT EXCEPT THAT HE'S BEEN SO SECRETIVE...

ORDERING THINGS?! WHAT KINDS OF THINGS?
I DON'T KNOW! WHENEVER A PACKAGE ARRIVES, HE TAKES IT INTO THE LABORATORY WITHOUT OPENING IT. HE'S THERE NOW. HE'S ALWAYS THERE, HAMMERING AND PUTTERING. I HAVE TO CALL HIM THREE AND FOUR TIMES FOR SUPPER!
6

ANDREW FOUND HIS FATHER-IN-LAW WORKING ON A "CUSTOMER" IN THE LABORATORY. THE OLD MAN'S MOOD SEEMED LIGHT AND GAY IN CONTRAST TO THE GLOOM OF THE SURROUNDINGS. HIS QUICK, EFFICIENT LABORS ON THE BLUISH CORPSE UNDER THE OVERHEAD LIGHT WERE IN THE MANNER OF A SEASONED PERFORMER ON A STAGE. HE LOOKED UP WITH A QUICK SMILE AS HIS SON-IN-LAW ENTERED...

I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU *LOOKING* SO WELL, MR. EDWARDS!

AH... ANDY, M'BOY! YOU'RE BACK *JUST IN TIME. TAKE OVER* ON THIS FELLOW, *WILL YOU?* I'VE GOT TO GO OUT AND MAIL A FEW *ORDERS*...

ORDERS? WHAT ORDERS? WE'VE GOT ALL THE *SUPPLIES* WE NEED...

NOW, NOW! THIS DOESN'T CONCERN YOU, MY BOY... NOT YET...

ANDREW REPORTED TO HIS WIFE...

YOU'RE *RIGHT,* DEAR. HE *IS* WORKING ON SOMETHING! I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT *IS,* BUT I'M GOING TO *FIND OUT!*

PLEASE DON'T LET'S HAVE ANY MORE *ARGUMENTS,* ANDREW...

THAT NIGHT AFTER SUPPER, JARVIS EXCUSED HIMSELF AND HURRIED TO THE LABORATORY. SOON, THE SOUNDS OF HAMMERING AND SAWING DRIFTED UPSTAIRS...

I'M GOING DOWN AND *SEE* WHAT HE'S *UP TO!*

ANDREW DESCENDED TO THE LABORATORY. THE DOOR WAS CLOSED. HE TRIED THE KNOB. HE SHOUTED ABOVE THE CLATTER WITHIN...

MR. EDWARDS! OPEN UP!

GO AWAY! GO AWAY AND *LEAVE ME ALONE!*

DAY AFTER DAY, PACKAGES ARRIVED. NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, JARVIS WOULD LOCK HIMSELF IN THE LABORATORY. AND ANDREW'S CURIOSITY GREW...

THIS *CLOSET,* MR. EDWARDS. WHY IS IT *PADLOCKED?*

YOU STAY OUT OF THAT CLOSET, ANDREW! MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS! JUST TEND TO YOUR BUTCHERING!

AND WHEN THE LABORATORY HAD NO "CUSTOMERS," JARVIS WOULD LOCK HIMSELF IN ALL DAY...TINKERING... CLANKING...BUZZING...

FATHER! PLEASE COME UP FOR DINNER! OH, THIS IS GETTING TO BE *UNBEARABLE...*

LET HIM *PLAY AROUND* DOWN THERE! *I'M* NOT LETTING *MY* DINNER GET COLD!

7

ONE NIGHT, JUST BEFORE SUPPER, THE APARTMENT ABOVE THE MORTUARY WAS SUDDENLY FILLED WITH A HUMMING SOUND COMING FROM THE LAB. ELAINE STAMPED ANGRILY...

FATHER! COME UP! YOUR SUPPER'S GETTING COLD! HONESTLY, ANDREW...SOMETIMES I THINK FATHER IS IN HIS DOTAGE!

YOU'RE TELLING ME! LOOK AT THESE OBITUARY NOTICES. JAMES CROCK FUNERAL HOME... SIX, SEVEN...NINE BODIES THEY HANDLED TODAY. THEY KNOW THE SCORE! WE DON'T HANDLE NINE A WEEK!

BODIES! CORPSES! CADAVERS! I'M SICK OF IT! SICK OF EVERYTHING! FATHER, IF YOU DON'T COME UP THIS MINUTE, I'LL...

CHOKE... ELAINE! LISTEN TO THIS! IT'S AN OBIT!

DAILY BANK R

ANDREW'S FACE DRAINED WHITE. HIS HANDS SHOOK...

"MR. JARVIS EDWARDS REGRETFULLY ANNOUNCES HIS DEATH AT 6:30 P.M. THIS EVENING. SURVIVING IS HIS DAUGHTER, ELAINE TULLY. BURIAL WILL BE FROM THE JARVIS EDWARDS MORTUARY."

ELAINE SHOT A QUICK GLANCE AT THE KITCHEN CLOCK...SWAYED MOMENTARILY...THEN WHISPERED...

FATHER... GASP...

IT... IT'S SOME SORT OF JOKE! IT...

DAILY NEWS BANK ROB

THE HUMMING FROM THE LABORATORY DRONED ON AND ON. ELAINE GAVE A LITTLE WHIMPERING CRY AND DARTED DOWN THE STAIRS...ANDREW CLOSE AT HER HEELS. THEY FLUNG OPEN THE LAB DOOR AND STOPPED...FROZEN STATUE-LIKE IN GRANITE HORROR AT WHAT THEY SAW...

ELAINE! DON'T LOOK!

OH, LORD!

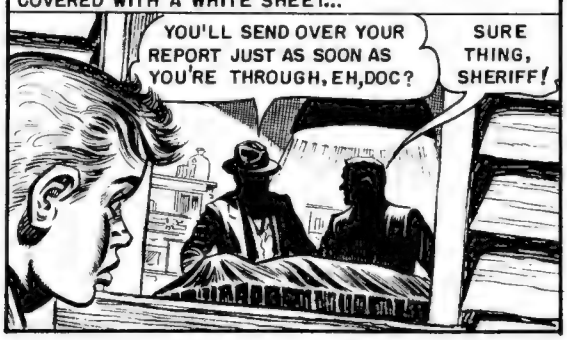
THE BLOODLESS CORPSE OF JARVIS EDWARDS LAY ON THE COLD MARBLE TABLE. AND OVER HIM, THE WEIRD MACHINE WITH THE METAL ARMS AND THE SPINNING SCALPEL AND THE CLUTCHING CLAWS AND THE HOSES AND JARS AND PUMPS AND NEEDLES HUMMED AND CLICKED AND FINISHED OFF THE EMBALMING JOB IT HAD STARTED AT 6:30 P.M....A JOB THAT JARVIS EDWARDS HIMSELF WOULD HAVE CONSIDERED "A WORK OF ART"...

HEH, HEH! SO THE OLD BOY BUILT HIMSELF HIS OWN MORTICIAN, EH? WELL, THAT'S ONE WAY OF UNDERTAKING ONE'S OWN UNDERTAKING. WELL, THAT ABOUT EMBALMS O.W.'S MAG FOR THIS ISSUE. WELL, I'LL SEE YOU ALL AGAIN IN MY MAG, TALES FROM THE CRYPT! TILL THEN, THIS IS YOUR CRYPT-KEEPER HOPING YOU'LL HAVE A HORRIBLE SHRIEK-END! 'BYE, NOW...

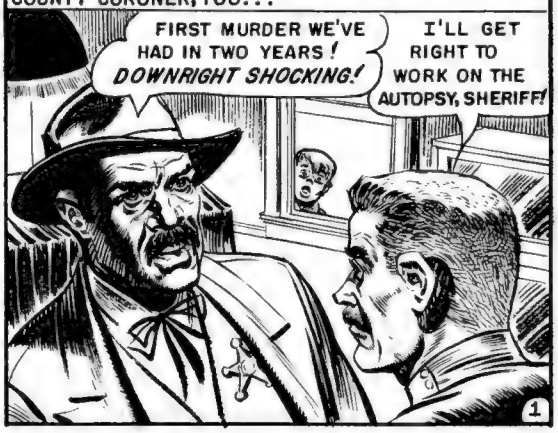
8

A LESSON IN ANATOMY!!

STEVEY WILLIAMS STOOD ON TIPTOES OUTSIDE HIS DADDY'S OFFICE, PEERING IN THROUGH THE PARTLY OPEN WINDOW! INSIDE, BEYOND THE GLITTERING ARRAY OF MEDICAL EQUIPMENT, SHERIFF AMES AND STEVEY'S DADDY WERE TALKING IN LOW TONES! STEVEY STRAINED HIS SEVEN-YEAR-OLD EARS... TRYING TO HEAR WHAT THEY WERE SAYING! BEFORE THE TWO MEN, STRETCHED OUT ON THE OPERATING TABLE, A STILL FORM LAY COVERED WITH A WHITE SHEET...



STEVEY'S DADDY WAS A DOCTOR! HIS OFFICE WAS IN ONE WING OF THE WILLIAMS HOME! BUT STEVEY'S DADDY HAD ANOTHER JOB... ONE THAT HE RARELY HAD A CALL FOR! STEVEY'S DADDY WAS THE COUNTY CORONER, TOO...



STEVEY WATCHED WITH FASCINATED ANTICIPATION AS HIS FATHER CLOSED THE OFFICE DOOR BEHIND SHERIFF AMES AND TURNED TOWARD THE DRAPED FIGURE ON THE TABLE! FROM A CHEST OF DRAWERS, DOCTOR WILLIAMS REMOVED A SHINY RAZOR-SHARP SCALPEL! STEVEY CLAPPED HIS TINY HAND TO HIS MOUTH...

GOLLY! DADDY'S GONNA OPERATE!

DOCTOR WILLIAMS THREW BACK THE SHEET THAT COVERED THE STIFF PALE BODY AND BENT OVER IT! STEVEY CRANED HIS NECK TO SEE...

GULP! HE...HE'S CUTTING HIM OPEN!

FOR A LONG TIME, STEVEY WATCHED AS HIS FATHER REMOVED THE VITAL ORGANS OF THE MURDER VICTIM... THE BAG-LIKE STOMACH, THE COILED AND ENDLESS INTESTINES, THE RED MUSCULAR HEART! STEVEY GASPED AT EACH NEW TREASURE HIS DADDY WITHDREW! THEN...

COUGH! HUH? *STEVEY! GET AWAY FROM THAT WINDOW!*

DOCTOR WILLIAMS RUSHED TO THE WINDOW! HIS RUBBER-GLOVED HANDS WERE COVERED WITH STICKY BLOTCHES! HE GLARED DOWN AT HIS SON! STEVEY BACKED AWAY, SINKING INTO THE SOFT FLOWERBED...

I...I WAS JUST LOOKIN', DADDY! I WAS *INTERESTED!*

NEVER MIND! THIS IS *NO SIGHT* FOR A *CHILD!* NOW *GO AWAY! GO AHEAD!* RUN ALONG AND *PLAY!*

STEVEY SULKED OFF AND THE WINDOW SLAMMED BEHIND HIM! AS HE PASSED THROUGH THE BACK GATE, STEVEY HEARD THE CLATTER OF THE VENETIAN BLINDS FALLING! HE KICKED A RUSTED CAN ANGRILY...

NEVER GET TO SEE *NUTHIN'!* HE'S ALWAYS CALLIN' ME A *CHILD!* HECK! I'M *ALMOST EIGHT!*

A BRIGHT-COLORED BUTTERFLY CAUGHT STEVEY'S EYE AND HE TROTTED AFTER IT, FOLLOWING ITS ERRATIC FLIGHT! ON ACROSS OLD MAN GREYSTONE'S FLOWER GARDEN, THROUGH MR. BUCKLEY'S ORCHARD, OVER FARMER SITLEY'S MEADOW, AND INTO THE WOODS BEYOND, STEVEY CHASED THE FLICKERING FLASH OF GOLD AND BLACK...

AW! IT ISN'T *EVER* GONNA LAND!

STEVEY MUSED OVER A CLUSTER OF WHITE MUSHROOMS THAT HUGGED A ROTTED LOG! HE KICKED AT THEM AND THEY BROKE OFF, TUMBLING EARTHWARD IN PIECES! A DEW-LADEN SPIDERWEB WAS THE NEXT OBJECT OF THE BOY'S ATTENTIONS! HE STUDIED THE HAIRY LITTLE FORM THAT CROUCHED SILENTLY AT THE WEB'S CENTER! THEN THROUGH IT, STEVE SAW...

GOLLY! *A MAN!*

2

STEVEY DUCKED UNDER THE SILKY NETWORK AND APPROACHED THE PROSTRATE FORM LYING IN THE BRUSH! HE GAZED AT THE FIGURE! THE MAN LAY QUITE STILL! HE DIDN'T SEEM TO BE BREATHING...

MAYBE...MAYBE HE'S *DEAD!MURDERED!* LIKE THE *OTHER* ONE!

STEVEY REACHED OUT, HESITANTLY, AND TOUCHED THE MAN'S ARM! NOTHING HAPPENED! STEVEY TAPPED IT A FEW TIMES! SUDDENLY THE MAN'S EYES SPRANG OPEN! HE SAT UP, GLARING AT THE BOY...

I...I THOUGHT YOU WAS *DEAD!*

DID YOU? WELL YOU SEE I'M *NOT!* NOW, *GO AWAY!*

STEVEY TURNED TO GO! HE DIDN'T LIKE THE WAY THE MAN'S EYES BURNED INTO HIS, ANYWAY! THEN...

WAIT A MINUTE, LITTLE BOY!

HUH?

THE STRANGER HAD GOTTEN TO HIS FEET! HE WAS A BIG MAN... WITH A HARD COLD FACE! HE BECKONED TO THE BOY...

C'MERE! I WANT TO *TALK* TO YOU!

I...I GOTTA *GO*, MISTER! I...I GOTTA *HELP MY DADDY!*

THE STRANGER MOVED CLOSE TO STEVEY! THE BOY SHUDDERED! A CHILDISH SENSE WARNED HIM TO FEAR THIS MAN...

HELP YOUR DADDY DO *WHAT?*

M-MY DADDY'S A *SCIENTIST!*

CHILDREN PLACE PROTECTIVE WALLS AROUND THEMSELVES IN STRANGE WAYS! STEVEY'S METHOD OF WARNING THE STRANGER THAT HE WAS NO ORDINARY BOY WAS TO *BRAG*...PERHAPS OVER-EXAGGERATE... ABOUT HIS FATHER...

A *SCIENTIST?* HOW INTERESTING! WHAT *KIND* OF WORK DOES HE *DO?*

IT...IT'S *SECRET!* I CAN'T *TELL* YOU!

THE STRANGER STUDIED THE BOY FOR A MOMENT! THEN HE REACHED INTO HIS POCKET! HE HELD UP A SHINY NEW DIME. STEVEY'S MOUTH WATERED! TWO *CANDY BARS* COULD BE BOUGHT WITH A *DIME*... NOT JUST *ONE*, BUT *TWO*...

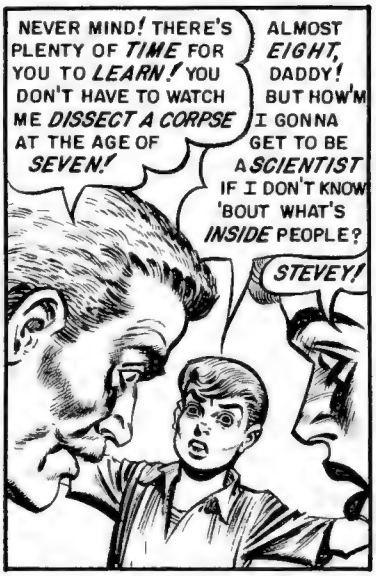
IT'S *YOURS* IF YOU'LL ANSWER A FEW *QUESTIONS*, LITTLE BOY!

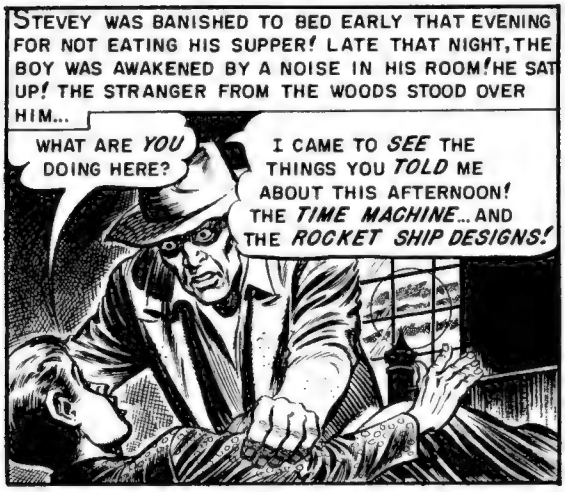
WELL...I...I DON'T KNOW! A DIME, HUH? GOLLY! WELL! GO AHEAD...ASK!

3

STEVEY WAS MUNCHING THE LAST OF THE SECOND CANDY BAR AS HE CAME INTO THE HOUSE! FROM THE KITCHEN, HIS FATHER'S VOICE CRACKLED SOFTLY...
THEY FOUND THE POOR FELLOW STARK NAKED IN THE WOODS! I'M STYMIED, MARTHA! I CAN'T SEEM TO FIND OUT WHAT KILLED HIM!
DON'T FRET, JOHN! YOU'LL HIT ON IT!

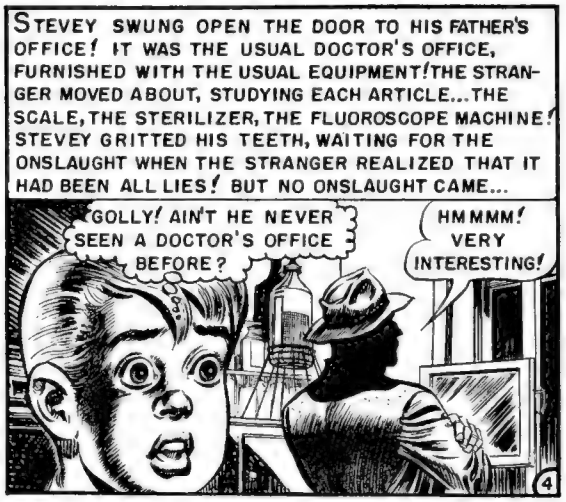
STEVEY SWALLOWED HARD, REMOVED ALL TRACES OF CHOCOLATE FROM HIS FACE, AND ENTERED INTO HIS PARENTS' PRESENCE...
WELL, YOUNG MAN! I'VE BEEN MEANING TO HAVE A TALK WITH YOU! WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA OF PEEKING INTO MY OFFICE? YOU KNOW THAT'S FORBIDDEN!
I WAS JUST INTERESTED, DADDY! HOW ELSE CAN I LEARN?


NEVER MIND! THERE'S PLENTY OF TIME FOR YOU TO LEARN! YOU DON'T HAVE TO WATCH ME DISSECT A CORPSE AT THE AGE OF SEVEN!
ALMOST EIGHT, DADDY! BUT HOW'M I GONNA GET TO BE A SCIENTIST IF I DON'T KNOW 'BOUT WHAT'S INSIDE PEOPLE?
STEVEY!


STEVEY WAS BANISHED TO BED EARLY THAT EVENING FOR NOT EATING HIS SUPPER! LATE THAT NIGHT, THE BOY WAS AWAKENED BY A NOISE IN HIS ROOM! HE SAT UP! THE STRANGER FROM THE WOODS STOOD OVER HIM...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
I CAME TO SEE THE THINGS YOU TOLD ME ABOUT THIS AFTERNOON! THE TIME MACHINE... AND THE ROCKET SHIP DESIGNS!

STEVEY'D TOLD THE STRANGER SOME PRETTY TALL STORIES TO GET THAT DIME! NOW THE STRANGER WAS DEMANDING PROOF OF HIS LITTLE WHITE LIES! STEVEY WAS CAUGHT! HE TRIED TO MAKE EXCUSES...
NO! I CAN'T SHOW YOU THOSE THINGS! THEY'RE IN DADDY'S LABORATORY!
TAKE ME THERE!

THE STRANGER'S COLD STARING EYES FRIGHTENED STEVEY! THE BOY DARED NOT CALL OUT! HE GOT OUT OF BED AND TIPTOED DOWN THE HALL... THE STRANGER FOLLOWING CLOSE AT HIS HEELS...
THIS WAY! BUT IF MY DADDY CATCHES YOU IN HERE...
DON'T WORRY! HE WON'T! JUST KEEP QUIET!


STEVEY SWUNG OPEN THE DOOR TO HIS FATHER'S OFFICE! IT WAS THE USUAL DOCTOR'S OFFICE, FURNISHED WITH THE USUAL EQUIPMENT! THE STRANGER MOVED ABOUT, STUDYING EACH ARTICLE... THE SCALE, THE STERILIZER, THE FLUOROSCOPE MACHINE! STEVEY GRITTED HIS TEETH, WAITING FOR THE ONSLAUGHT WHEN THE STRANGER REALIZED THAT IT HAD BEEN ALL LIES! BUT NO ONSLAUGHT CAME...
GOLLY! AIN'T HE NEVER SEEN A DOCTOR'S OFFICE BEFORE?
HMMMM! VERY INTERESTING!
4

THE STRANGER STEPPED BEHIND THE FLUOROSCOPE SCREEN, EYEING THE EBONY BACKBOARD...
IS... IS THIS THE TIME MACHINE?
HUH? UH! ER... AH... YEAH! YEAH... THAT'S IT!
STEVEY BREATHED A SIGH OF RELIEF! THE STRANGER WAS A DOPE! HE DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING! STEVEY FLICKED ON THE FLUOROSCOPE MACHINE SWITCH! THE SCREEN BEGAN TO GLOW! STEVEY'D SHOW HIM SOMETHING ALL RIGHT...
RATHER SIMPLE IN DESIGN! HOW DOES IT WORK?
SAY, MISTER! YOU REALLY WANT TO SEE SOMETHING? TAKE A LOOK... AT... AT...
STEVEY'S LITTLE HAND SHOT FORWARD AND HE SHUT OFF THE FLUOROSCOPE AS THE STRANGER TURNED TOWARD HIM...
LOOK AT WHAT, LITTLE BOY?
N-N-NOTHIN'! NOTHIN' AT ALL! YOU... YOU BETTER GO!
A BOARD CREAKED OUT IN THE HALL! THE STRANGER STIFFENED...
IT'S MY DADDY! QUICK! OUT THE WINDOW!
REMEMBER! NOT A WORD ABOUT ME BEING HERE!
THEN HE WAS GONE! STEVEY SHOOK HIS HEAD SLOWLY! SUDDENLY HIS LITTLE FACE LIT UP! HE TURNED TOWARD THE DRAPED FORM ON THE TABLE... THE DISSECTED BODY OF THE MURDERED MAN! STEVEY LIFTED THE SHEET GINGERLY...
STEVEY!
GULP!
DOCTOR WILLIAMS'S FACE WAS PURPLE WITH RAGE! STEVEY DROPPED THE SHEET AND SPUN AROUND...
WHAT IN BLAZES ARE YOU DOING, YOU FIENDISH LITTLE BRAT?
J-JUST LOOKIN', DADDY!
GET TO BED! GO ON! GET TO BED THIS INSTANT! AND IF I CATCH YOU IN HERE AGAIN... AT ANY TIME... I'LL WHIP THE DAYLIGHTS OUT OF YOU!
YES, DADDY! UH... FIRST, CAN I ASK YOU SOMETHIN', DADDY?
5

DOC WILLIAMS NODDED ANGRILY..
DADDY! DOES EVERYBODY HAVE A HEART.. AN' INTESTINES... AN' A STOMACH... AN' BONES?
YES! EVERYBODY! NOW GET TO BED!
DADDY! DO PEOPLE HAVE OTHER THINGS IN THEIR INSIDES... LIKE WHEELS... AN' WIRES... AN' STICKS?
NO! NEVER! NOW, ARE YOU GOING TO GET TO BED?
STEVEY ASKED TWO MORE QUESTIONS AND TROTTED OFF! HIS FATHER WATCHED HIM GO... SCRATCHING HIS HEAD..
CRAZY KID! WHAT NOTIONS A SEVEN-YEAR-OLD CAN GET! AND LORD... WHAT MORBID CURIOSITY!
THE NEXT DAY, STEVEY SEARCHED THE WOODS BEYOND FARMER SITLEY'S MEADOW...LOOKING FOR THE STRANGER! STEVEY FOUND HIM AS HE'D FOUND HIM THE DAY BEFORE...LYING IN THE BRUSH...HIDDEN FROM SIGHT! STEVEY KNELT BESIDE THE PROSTRATE MAN AND DREW A GLEAMING OBJECT FROM HIS POCKET... A SCALPEL...
DADDY'S WRONG! I'VE GOT TO SHOW HIM!
IN HIS OFFICE, DOCTOR JOHN WILLIAMS SHOOK HIS HEAD SADLY, AS SHERIFF AMES ENTERED...
SORRY, SHERIFF! I'M STUMPED! THE CLOSEST I'VE COME IS EXPOSURE AND FROSTBITE! BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! IT'S SUMMER!
WELL, AT LEAST WE GOT A LINE ON 'IM! ED DOUD SAID HE CHASED A TRAMP DOWN AT THE FREIGHT YARDS WHO ANSWERS THE STIFF'S DESCRIPTION! HE'S ON HIS WAY OVER TO IDENTIFY THE BODY!
THE DOOR TO DOCTOR WILLIAMS'S OFFICE OPENED SLOWLY AND STEVEY PEERED IN...
STEVEY! HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU...?
CAN I SEE YOU A MINUTE, DADDY? IT'S VERY IMPORTANT!
DOCTOR WILLIAMS EXCUSED HIMSELF AND WENT OUT INTO THE HALL...
MAKE IT SNAPPY, STEVEY! I'M BUSY!
LOOK, DADDY! SEE? WIRES... AN' WHEELS... AND STICKS! YOU WERE WRONG WHEN YOU TOLD ME NOBODY ALIVE HAD THINGS LIKE THAT IN THEIR INSIDES!
6

DOCTOR WILLIAMS STARED AT THE ASSEMBLY OF JUNK CLUTCHED IN HIS SMALL SON'S HANDS...

WHERE...WHERE DID YOU *GET* THESE...*THESE THINGS?*

FROM *THE STRANGER!* I *CUT HIM OPEN*... JUST LIKE *YOU* DO! HE WAS *ASLEEP!*

STEVEY'S DADDY WAS HORRIFIED AT HIS SON'S WORDS! THE BOY TOOK HIS FATHER TO THE WOODS WHERE THE STRANGER LAY...

GOOD LORD!

WHEN I CUT HIM OPEN, A FUNNY LITTLE *THING* JUMPED OUT! THERE IT IS! I *STEPPED* ON IT...*SQUASHED* IT!

DOCTOR WILLIAMS STUDIED THE HIDEOUS LITTLE CRAB-LIKE CREATURE THAT LAY DEAD BESIDE THE DISSECTED STRANGER...

SEE, DADDY! *HE* WAS ALIVE! AN *HE* HAD *WIRES* AN *WHEELS* 'STEAD OF A *STOMACH* AN' *INTESTINES!*

AND...AND YOU SAY THIS LITTLE *...THING...* WAS *INSIDE* HIM?

SHERIFF AMES CAME UP...BREATHLESS...

UH-HUH! IT WAS *IN* WITH THE *WIRES* AN' *STUFF!*

DOC! ED DOUD JUST *POSITIVELY IDENTIFIED* THE STIFF IN YOUR OFFICE AS THE *TRAMP* HE CHASED T'OTHER NIGHT! ED SAID HE WAS WEARIN' A *PATCHED TWEED SUIT!*

HEY! *THIS HERE GUY'S WEARIN' A PATCHED TWEED SUIT! HE* MUST HAVE KILLED THE *TRAMP!*

THAT'S NO *GUY*, SHERIFF! THAT'S A *ROBOT* OF SOME KIND! I...I DON'T QUITE UNDERSTAND!

GOLLY! A ROBOT! A *REAL GENUINE ROBOT!*

EPILOGUE: ACROSS THE ENDLESS VOID OF SPACE, IN ONE OF THE MILLIONS OF STAR CLUSTERS THAT FORM OUR GALAXY...ON THEIR PLANET-HOME, THE CRAB-LIKE CREATURES TURNED SADLY FROM THEIR INTERSTELLAR COMMUNICATOR...

FAILURE! THE LIGHT HAS GONE *OFF!* OUR *PRE-INVASION AGENT* HAS BEEN *DESTROYED!*

WE'VE *MIS-JUDGED* THE CREATURES OF THE *THIRD PLANET* OF STAR L-33057!

THEY ARE *TOO CLEVER* FOR US! THEY ARE *TOO FAR ADVANCED SCIENTIFICALLY* FOR US TO *CONQUER THEM!* THEY *MUST BE*...TO HAVE *DISCOVERED, TRACKED DOWN*, AND *ELIMINATED* OUR AGENT!

WE WILL *ABANDON OUR INVASION PLANS!* WE WILL *WAIT!* PERHAPS IN SOME *FUTURE* EON, THE TIME WILL *COME!*

THE END

7

Stories From

The Martian Chronicles

Mars is Heaven!

THE SHIP CAME DOWN FROM SPACE. IT CAME DOWN FROM THE STARS AND THE SILENT GULFS OF SPACE. IT WAS A NEW SHIP, THE ONLY ONE OF ITS KIND. IT HAD FIRE IN ITS BELLY AND MEN IN ITS BODY, AND IT MOVED WITH CLEAN SILENCE, FIERY AND HOT. A CROWD HAD GATHERED AT ITS NEW YORK LAUNCHING SITE AND SHOUTED AND WAVED THEIR HANDS UP INTO THE SUNLIGHT... AND THE ROCKET HAD JERKED UP, BLOOMED OUT GREAT FLOWERS OF HEAT AND COLOR, AND RUN AWAY INTO SPACE ON THE *FIRST VOYAGE TO MARS!* AND NOW, IT WAS DECELERATING WITH METAL EFFICIENCY IN THE UPPER ZONES OF MARS'S ATMOSPHERE...

ADAPTED FROM A STORY BY

RAY BRADBURY

NAVIGATOR LUSTIG, ARCHAEOLOGIST HINKSTON, AND CAPTAIN JOHN BLACK WATCHED MARS SWING UP UNDER THEM...

THE SHIP LANDED SOFTLY ON A LAWN OF GREEN GRASS. OUTSIDE, UPON THE LAWN, STOOD AN IRON DEER. FURTHER UP THE LAWN, A TALL BROWN VICTORIAN HOUSE SAT IN THE QUIET SUNLIGHT. AN OLD SWING WHICH WAS HOOKED INTO THE PORCH CEILING SWUNG BACK AND FORTH, BACK AND FORTH, IN A LITTLE BREEZE...

AROUND THE ROCKET IN FOUR DIRECTIONS SPREAD THE TOWN, GREEN AND MOTIONLESS IN THE MARTIAN SPRING. THERE WERE WHITE HOUSES AND RED BRICK ONES, AND TALL ELM TREES BLOWING IN THE WIND, AND TALL MAPLES, AND HORSE CHESTNUTS. AND CHURCH STEEPLES WITH GOLDEN BELLS SILENT IN THEM...

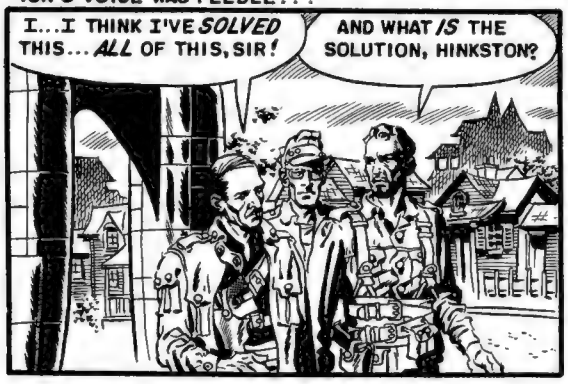
HOLD ON, LUSTIG. JUST A *MOMENT*. NOBODY GAVE ANY *ORDERS*. HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT THIS *IS*?
WE *KNOW* WHAT IT IS, SIR. IT'S A *SMALL TOWN* WITH *GOOD AIR* IN IT, SIR.

AND IT'S A SMALL TOWN LIKE AN *EARTH* TOWN. *INCREDIBLE!* IT *CAN'T* BE, BUT IT *IS*.
DO YOU THINK THAT THE CIVILIZATIONS OF *TWO PLANETS* CAN *PROGRESS* AT THE *SAME RATE* AND EVOLVE IN THE *SAME WAY*, HINKSTON?

I WOULDN'T HAVE THOUGHT SO, SIR. IT *IS* QUITE *STRANGE!*
STRANGE, HECK! IT'S ABSOLUTELY *IMPOSSIBLE!* LOOK OUT THERE. TELL ME IF IT'S *LOGICAL* THAT MARTIANS SHOULD HAVE *PORCH SWINGS, VICTORIAN HOUSES, LAWNS, CHESTNUT TREES*...

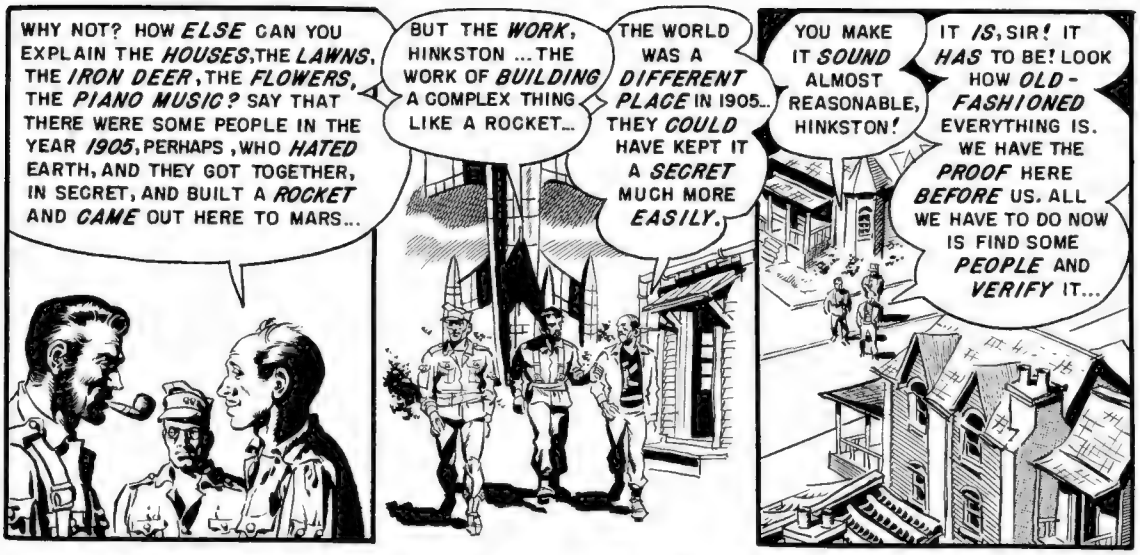
IT *MAY* BE THAT THERE *ARE* SIMILIAR PATTERNS OF *THOUGHT, MOVEMENT, CIVILIZATION* ON *EVERY* PLANET IN OUR SYSTEM!
WELL! LET'S TAKE A CLOSER LOOK! ATTENTION ALL HANDS! REMAIN IN THE SHIP...

THE THREE MEN CAME OUT INTO THE SUNSHINE. IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL SPRING DAY. SOMEWHERE A PIANO PLAYED, SOFTLY, DROWSILY. THE SONG WAS *BEAUTIFUL DREAMER*. LUSTIG BEGAN TO TREMBLE! HINKSTON'S VOICE WAS FEEBLE...



THE SOFT WIND BLEW. THE SKY WAS SERENE. SOMEWHERE A HORSE AND WAGON TROTTED AND ROLLED BY, BUMPING...

ROCKET TRAVEL *BEGAN* TO MARS IN THE YEARS *BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR*, SIR!
NO! THIS IS *1960*, HINKSTON. *BEFORE* THE FIRST WORLD WAR...?
Faulty
2


WHY NOT? HOW ELSE CAN YOU EXPLAIN THE HOUSES, THE LAWNS, THE IRON DEER, THE FLOWERS, THE PIANO MUSIC? SAY THAT THERE WERE SOME PEOPLE IN THE YEAR 1905, PERHAPS, WHO HATED EARTH, AND THEY GOT TOGETHER, IN SECRET, AND BUILT A ROCKET AND CAME OUT HERE TO MARS...
BUT THE WORK, HINKSTON ... THE WORK OF BUILDING A COMPLEX THING LIKE A ROCKET...
THE WORLD WAS A DIFFERENT PLACE IN 1905... THEY COULD HAVE KEPT IT A SECRET MUCH MORE EASILY.
YOU MAKE IT SOUND ALMOST REASONABLE, HINKSTON!
IT IS, SIR! IT HAS TO BE! LOOK HOW OLD-FASHIONED EVERYTHING IS. WE HAVE THE PROOF HERE BEFORE US. ALL WE HAVE TO DO NOW IS FIND SOME PEOPLE AND VERIFY IT...

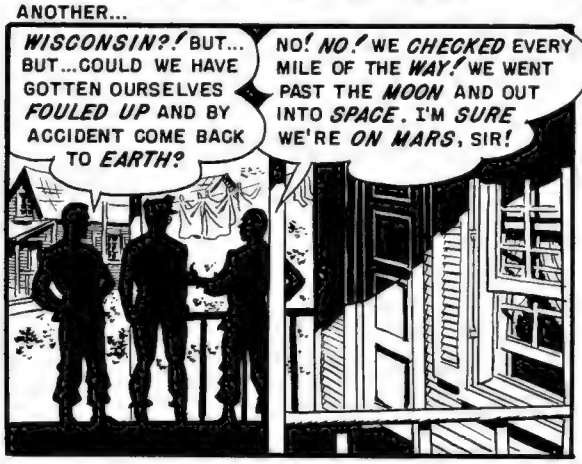
HOLLOW ECHOES SOUNDED FROM THE BOARDS AS THEY WALKED ACROSS THE PORCH AND STOOD BEFORE THE SCREEN DOOR. INSIDE THEY COULD SEE A CRYSTAL CHANDELIER AND A COMFORTABLE MORRIS CHAIR. CAPTAIN JOHN BLACK RANG THE BELL...

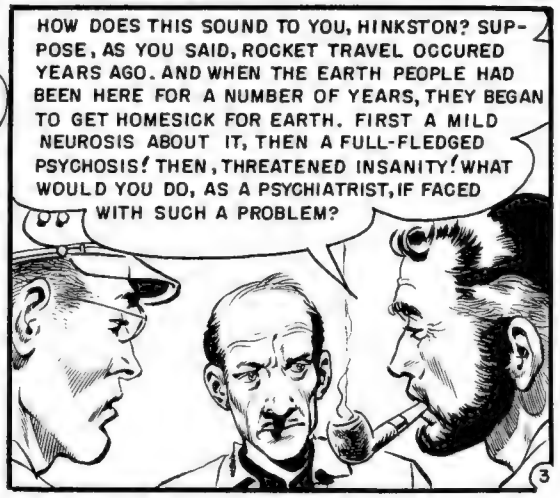
IF YOU'RE SELLING SOMETHING, I'M MUCH TOO BUSY AND I HAVEN'T TIME...
I...I BEG YOUR PARDON, BUT WE'RE STRANGERS HERE, MA'AM! WE'RE FROM EARTH, AND WE WANT TO KNOW HOW THIS TOWN GOT HERE AND HOW YOU GOT HERE!

THE WOMAN ADDRESSED THEM AS THOUGH SHE WERE ADDRESSING CHILDREN...

THIS TOWN WAS BUILT IN 1886. THIS IS GREEN LAKE, WISCONSIN, ON THE CONTINENT OF AMERICA, SURROUNDED BY THE PACIFIC AND ATLANTIC OCEANS, ON A PLACE CALLED THE WORLD. NOW, GO AWAY! GOOD-BYE!
BUT...WAIT...

SHE SLAMMED THE DOOR. THEY LOOKED AT ONE ANOTHER...


WISCONSIN?! BUT... BUT...COULD WE HAVE GOTTEN OURSELVES FOULED UP AND BY ACCIDENT COME BACK TO EARTH?
NO! NO! WE CHECKED EVERY MILE OF THE WAY! WE WENT PAST THE MOON AND OUT INTO SPACE. I'M SURE WE'RE ON MARS, SIR!


HOW DOES THIS SOUND TO YOU, HINKSTON? SUPPOSE, AS YOU SAID, ROCKET TRAVEL OCCURED YEARS AGO. AND WHEN THE EARTH PEOPLE HAD BEEN HERE FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, THEY BEGAN TO GET HOMESICK FOR EARTH. FIRST A MILD NEUROSIS ABOUT IT, THEN A FULL-FLEDGED PSYCHOSIS! THEN, THREATENED INSANITY! WHAT WOULD YOU DO, AS A PSYCHIATRIST, IF FACED WITH SUCH A PROBLEM?
3

WELL, I'D REARRANGE THE CIVILIZATION ON MARS SO IT *RESEMBLED EARTH* MORE AND MORE EVERY DAY! I'D TRY TO CONVINCE THESE POOR HOMESICK SOULS THAT *THIS* REALLY *WAS* EARTH, NOT MARS AT ALL...

GOOD ENOUGH! THAT WOMAN IN THAT HOUSE BACK THERE JUST *THINKS* SHE'S LIVING ON EARTH! IT PROTECTS HER SANITY! SHE AND ALL THE OTHERS IN THIS TOWN...
CAPTAIN! OH... MY LORD...

LUSTIG STARED DOWN THE QUIET, DREAMING AFTERNOON STREET...
WHAT *IS* IT, LUSTIG?
OH, SIR... SIR... WHAT I *SEE*... WHAT I *SEE* NOW *BEFORE* ME... OH...

AND LUSTIG BEGAN TO CRY. HIS FINGERS CAME UP, TWISTING AND TREMBLING, AND HIS FACE WAS ALL WONDER AND JOY AND INCREDULITY. HE BEGAN TO RUN, STUMBLING, AWKWARDLY...
OH, GOD... *GOD*... *THANK* YOU... *THANK YOU*...
LUSTIG!
DON'T LET HIM GET *AWAY!*

NOW LUSTIG WAS RUNNING AT FULL SPEED, SHOUTING. HE TURNED INTO A YARD HALFWAY DOWN THE LITTLE SHADY STREET AND LEAPED UPON THE PORCH OF A LARGE GREEN HOUSE. TWO OLD PEOPLE STOOD IN THE DOORWAY, THEIR FACES LIGHTING UP...
GRANDMA! GRANDPA!
ALBERT! OH, ALBERT! IT'S BEEN SO MANY *YEARS!* HOW YOU'VE *GROWN*, BOY...

ALBERT LUSTIG SOBBED AS HE HELD THEM, TURNED THEM, KISSED THEM, HUGGED THEM, CRIED ON THEM, HELD THEM OUT AGAIN, AND BLINKED AT THE TWO LITTLE OLD PEOPLE...
GRANDMA! GRANDPA! GOOD TO *SEE* YOU! YOU LOOK *FINE... FINE!*
COME INSIDE, LAD. COME INSIDE...

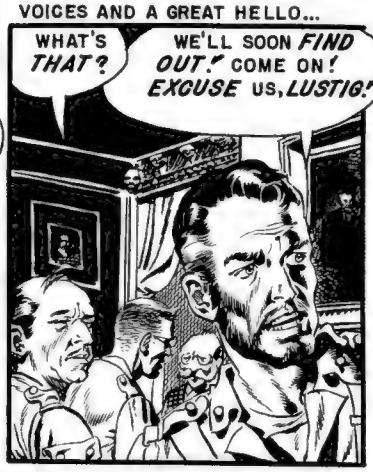
CAPTAIN BLACK! HINKSTON! COME *HERE! COME HERE!* I WANT YOU TO MEET MY *GRANDFOLKS!*
HOWDY! ANY FRIEND OF *ALBERT'S* IS *OURS, TOO!* DON'T STAND THERE WITH YOUR *MOUTHS* OPEN! *COME ON IN!*
4

IN THE LIVING ROOM OF THE OLD HOUSE IT WAS COOL AND A GRANDFATHER CLOCK TICKED HIGH AND LONG IN ONE CORNER...

OH, *YES*, CAPTAIN! THEY'VE BEEN *DEAD* FOR *THIRTY YEARS*.
AND *YOU* TAKE THIS SO *CALMLY!*
TUSH, CAPTAIN! WHO ARE WE TO *QUESTION* WHAT *HAPPENS*? HERE WE ARE, *ALIVE* AGAIN, AND NO QUESTIONS *ASKED*. A *SECOND CHANCE*...

IS...IS THIS... *HEAVEN?*
NONSENSE, NO. IT'S A WORLD AND WE GET A SECOND CHANCE. BUT THEN, NOBODY TOLD US WHY WE WERE ON THE *FIRST EARTH, EITHER*. HOW DO WE KNOW THERE WASN'T *ANOTHER*...BEFORE *THAT ONE?*

FAR AWAY, OUTSIDE IN THE SUNLIGHT, THERE WAS A SOUND OF VOICES AND A GREAT HELLO...



CAPTAIN BLACK STOOD LOOKING AT HIS SHIP! THE PORT WAS OPEN AND HIS CREW WAS STREAMING OUT, WAVING THEIR HANDS. A CROWD OF PEOPLE HAD GATHERED...

IN AND THROUGH AND AMONG THESE PEOPLE THE MEMBERS OF THE CREW WERE RUNNING, TALKING, LAUGHING, SHAKING HANDS. PEOPLE DID LITTLE DANCES. PEOPLE SWARMED. THE ROCKET LAY EMPTY AND ABANDONED...

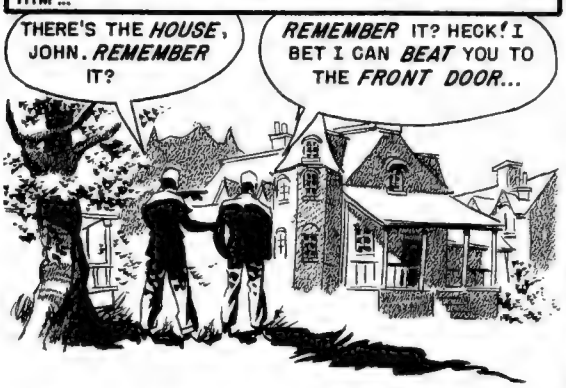
A BRASS BAND EXPLODED. THEN, EACH MEMBER OF THE CREW WITH A MOTHER ON ONE ARM, A FATHER OR SISTER ON THE OTHER, WAS SPIRITED OFF DOWN THE STREET, INTO COTTAGES OR BIG MANSIONS, AND DOORS SLAMMED SHUT...

THINK HOW THEY *FELT*, CAPTAIN... SEEING FAMILIAR FACES OUTSIDE THE SHIP!
THAT'S NO *EXCUSE!* I WOULD HAVE OBEYED ORDERS! I WOULD HAVE...
5

THE CAPTAIN'S MOUTH REMAINED OPEN. ALONG THE SIDEWALK UNDER THE MARTIAN SUN, TALL, SMILING, EYES BLUE, FACE TAN, CAME A YOUNG MAN OF SOME TWENTY-SIX YEARS...

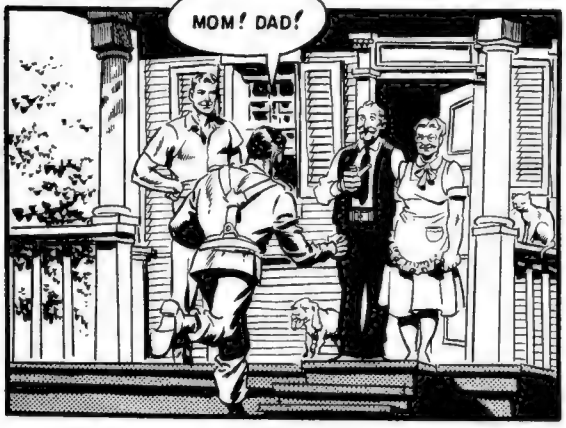
ED! WHAT IS THIS? YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED OVER THE YEARS. YOU DIED WHEN YOU WERE TWENTY-SIX, AND I WAS NINETEEN, AND HERE YOU ARE, AND, LORD, WHAT GOES ON, WHAT GOES ON?
MOM'S WAITING, JOHN!

HINKSTON WAS GONE. HE HAD SEEN HIS OWN HOUSE DOWN THE STREET AND WAS RUNNING FOR IT. EDWARD GRABBED CAPTAIN BLACK'S ARM AND MARCHED HIM...



THEY RAN. THE WIND ROARED OVER CAPTAIN JOHN BLACK'S EARS. THE GROUND ROARED BENEATH HIS FEET. HE SAW THE GOLDEN FIGURE OF EDWARD BLACK PULL AHEAD OF HIM. HE SAW THE HOUSE RUSH FORWARD... THE DOOR OPEN... THE SCREEN SWING BACK...

IN THE DOORWAY, MOM, PINK AND PLUMP AND BRIGHT. AND BEHIND HER, PEPPER GREY, DAD, WITH HIS PIPE IN HIS HAND...



IT WAS A LONG AFTERNOON. THEY FINISHED LUNCH AND THEY SAT IN THE LIVING ROOM AND HE TOLD THEM ALL ABOUT HIS ROCKET AND HIS BEING CAPTAIN...

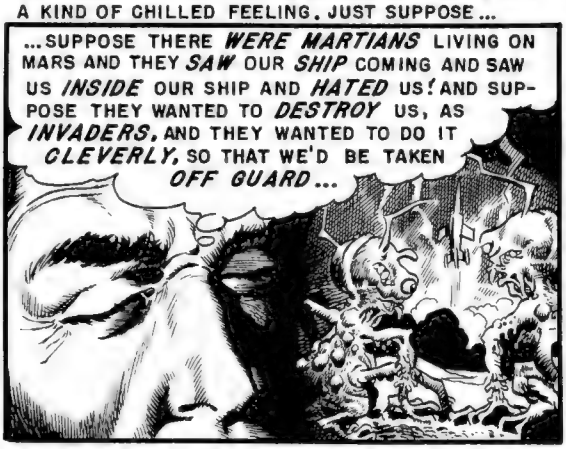
I'LL WAKE IN THE MORNING, AND I'LL BE IN MY ROCKET IN SPACE, AND ALL THIS WILL BE GONE.
NO! NO! DON'T THINK THAT! DON'T QUESTION! GOD IS GOOD TO US. LET'S BE HAPPY.
6

AND THEN IT WAS NIGHT AND HE LEFT THE LAND OF CIGAR SMOKE AND PERFUME AND BOOKS AND ASCENDED THE STAIRS, TALKING, TALKING WITH EDWARD. EDWARD PUSHED OPEN THE DOOR AND THERE WAS THE YELLOW BRASS BED AND THE OLD BANNERS FROM COLLEGE DAYS...

THE LIGHTS WERE OUT. THEY WERE IN BED, SIDE BY SIDE, AS IN THOSE DAYS, HOW MANY DECADES AGO...

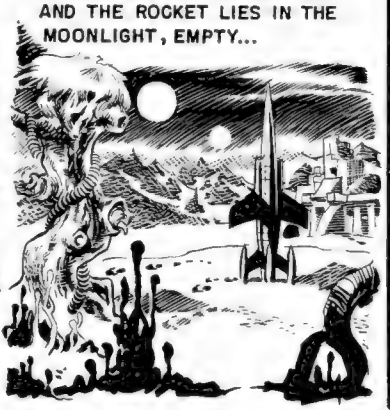
CAPTAIN BLACK LAY PEACEFULLY, LETTING HIS THOUGHTS FLOAT...

HE LAUGHED OUT LOUD, ALMOST. HE HAD THE MOST RIDICULOUS THEORY ALL OF A SUDDEN. IT GAVE HIM A KIND OF CHILLED FEELING. JUST SUPPOSE...

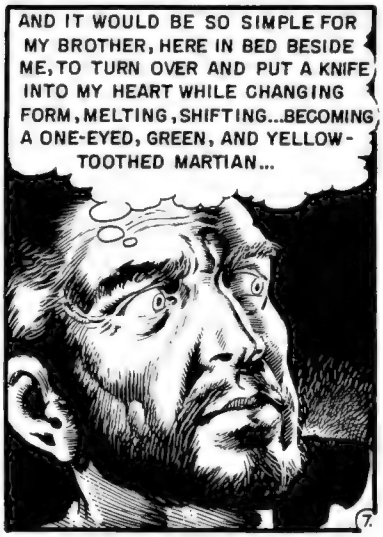

...SUPPOSE THERE *WERE MARTIANS* LIVING ON MARS AND THEY *SAW* OUR *SHIP* COMING AND SAW US *INSIDE* OUR SHIP AND *HATED* US! AND SUPPOSE THEY WANTED TO *DESTROY* US, AS *INVADERS*, AND THEY WANTED TO DO IT *CLEVERLY*, SO THAT WE'D BE TAKEN *OFF GUARD*...

WHAT A CLEVER WEAPON TO USE AGAINST EARTHMEN WITH ATOMIC WEAPONS! WHAT MORE NATURAL? WHAT MORE SIMPLE? A MAN DOESN'T ASK QUESTIONS WHEN HIS MOTHER IS SUDDENLY BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE; HE'S MUCH TOO HAPPY!

AND THE BRASS BAND PLAYED AND EVERYBODY WAS TAKEN TO PRIVATE HOMES. AND NOW WE ARE ALL IN VARIOUS BEDS, WITH NO WEAPONS TO PROTECT US, AND THE ROCKET LIES IN THE MOONLIGHT, EMPTY...



AND IT WOULD BE SO SIMPLE FOR MY BROTHER, HERE IN BED BESIDE ME, TO TURN OVER AND PUT A KNIFE INTO MY HEART WHILE CHANGING FORM, MELTING, SHIFTING...BECOMING A ONE-EYED, GREEN, AND YELLOW-TOOTHED MARTIAN...



AND IN ALL THE HOUSES DOWN THE STREET, A DOZEN BROTHERS OR FATHERS SUDDENLY MELTING AWAY AND TAKING OUT KNIVES AND DOING THINGS TO THE UNSUSPECTING SLEEPING EARTHMEN!
JOHN! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

CAPTAIN JOHN BLACK BROKE AND RAN ACROSS THE ROOM! HE SCREAMED TWICE...

HE NEVER REACHED THE DOOR...

IN THE MORNING, THE BRASS BAND PLAYED A MOURNFUL DIRGE, AND FROM EVERY HOUSE CAME LITTLE SOLEMN PROCESSIONS BEARING LONG BOXES. AND ALONG THE SUNFILLED STREETS, WEEPING AND CHANGING, CAME GRANDMAS AND GRANDPAS AND MOTHERS AND SISTERS AND BROTHERS, WALKING TO THE GRAVEYARD WHERE THERE WERE OPEN HOLES FRESHLY DUG AND NEW TOMBSTONES INSTALLED...

THE COFFINS WERE LOWERED! SOIL WAS SHOVELED IN ON THE COFFIN TOPS! THEN THE BRASS BAND SLAMMED AND BANGED BACK INTO TOWN AND THE CROWD, WITH MELTING FACES, SHIFTING LIKE WAX, STOOD AROUND AND WAVED AND SHOUTED AS THE ROCKET WAS TORN TO PIECES AND STREWN ABOUT AND BLOWN UP...

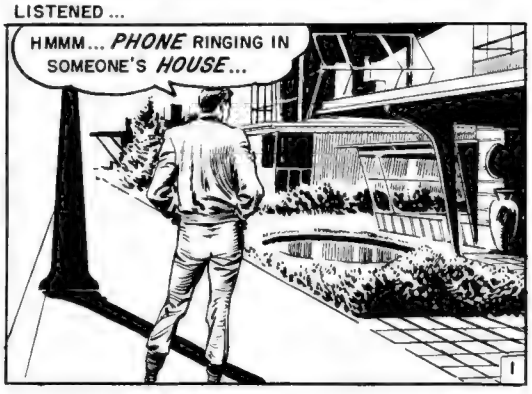
THE SILENT TOWNS

THERE WAS A LITTLE WHITE SILENT TOWN ON THE EDGE OF THE DEAD MARTIAN SEA. THE TOWN WAS EMPTY. NO ONE MOVED IN IT. LONELY LIGHTS BURNED IN ITS STORES ALL DAY. ITS SHOP DOORS WERE WIDE, AS IF PEOPLE HAD RUN OFF WITHOUT USING THEIR KEYS. ITS BEDS WERE EMPTY AND COLD. THE ONLY SOUND WAS THE POWER HUM OF ELECTRIC LINES AND DYNAMOS, STILL ALIVE, ALL BY THEMSELVES. WATER RAN IN FORGOTTEN BATHTUBS, POURING OUT INTO THE LIVING ROOMS, ONTO PORCHES, AND DOWN THROUGH LITTLE GARDEN PLOTS TO FEED NEGLECTED FLOWERS. ALONG THE EMPTY AVENUES OF THIS TOWN, NOW, WHISTLING SOFTLY, KICKING A TIN CAN AHEAD OF HIM, CAME A TALL, THIN MAN...

ADAPTED FROM A STORY BY
RAY BRADBURY

HIS NAME WAS WALTER GRIPP. HE HAD A PLACER MINE AND A REMOTE SHACK FAR UP IN THE BLUE MARTIAN HILLS, AND HE WALKED TO TOWN ONCE EVERY TWO WEEKS TO SEE IF HE COULD MARRY A QUIET AND INTELLIGENT WOMAN. OVER THE YEARS HE HAD ALWAYS RETURNED TO HIS SHACK, ALONE AND DISAPPOINTED. NOW, TONIGHT, HE DRIFTED UP AND DOWN, SEEING THE WAX WOMEN IN EVERY COLORFUL SHOP WINDOW, AND REALIZING...

ACROSS TOWN WAS A ROCKET PORT. YOU COULD STILL SMELL THE HARD, SCORCHED SMELL WHERE THE LAST ROCKET BLASTED OFF WHEN IT WENT BACK TO EARTH. IF YOU DROPPED A DIME IN THE TELESCOPE AND POINTED IT TOWARD EARTH, PERHAPS YOU COULD SEE NEW YORK EXPLODE, MAYBE LONDON COULD BE SEEN COVERED WITH A NEW KIND OF FOG. PERHAPS THEN IT MIGHT BE UNDERSTOOD WHY THIS SMALL MARTIAN TOWN WAS ABANDONED. WALTER LISTENED...



How quick was the evacuation? Walk into any store, bang the 'no sale' key. Cash drawers jump out, all bright and jingly with coins and bills. That war on earth must be very bad. Walter heard the phone ring again. He sat down on the curb..

He screamed, leaping...

He raced over the lawn, up the steps, into the house, down a dark hall. He yanked up a receiver ...

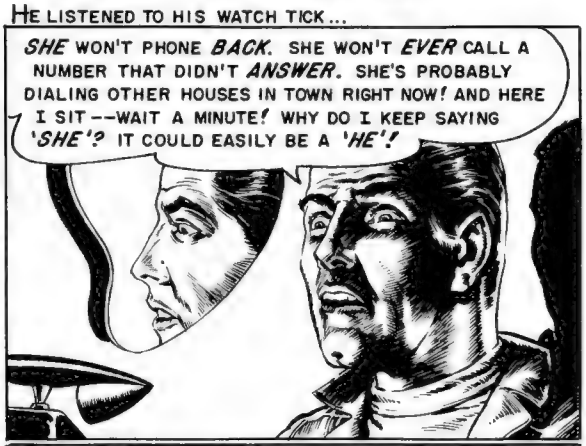
He banged the phone, shouting at himself...

YOU *STUPID IDIOT!* SITTING ON THE *CURB*, YOU FOOL! OH, YOU *BLASTED AWFUL* FOOL! COME ON, RING AGAIN! *COME ON*...
HE SQUEEZED THE PHONE, PLEADINGLY...

He'd never thought there might be others left on Mars. He'd seen no one. He'd figured that all other towns were as empty as this one. Now, staring at this terrible little black phone, he trembled. Interlocking dial systems connected every town on Mars. From which of thirty cities had the call come?

He waited. He wandered into the strange kitchen, thawed some iced huckleberries from the deep freeze, ate them disconsolately. He stood in the hall the rest of the night, telling himself...

He listened to his watch tick...


SHE WON'T PHONE *BACK*. SHE WON'T *EVER* CALL A NUMBER THAT DIDN'T *ANSWER*. SHE'S PROBABLY DIALING OTHER HOUSES IN TOWN RIGHT NOW! AND HERE I SIT--WAIT A MINUTE! WHY DO I KEEP SAYING '*SHE*'? IT COULD EASILY BE A '*HE*'!

His heart slowed. He felt very cold and hollow. He wanted very much for it to be a 'she'... 2

HE WALKED OUT OF THE HOUSE AND STOOD IN THE CENTER OF THE EARLY, DIM MORNING STREET. HE LISTENED. NOT A SOUND. NO BIRDS. NO CARS. ONLY HIS HEART BEATING...

HE SWAYED IN A SLOW CIRCLE, TURNING HIS HEAD FROM ONE SILENT HOUSE TO ANOTHER...

SHE'LL PHONE MORE AND MORE NUMBERS. IT *MUST* BE A WOMAN. *WHY?* ONLY A *WOMAN* WOULD CALL AND CALL. A *MAN* WOULDN'T. A MAN IS *INDEPENDENT.* DID *I* PHONE ANYONE? *NO!* NEVER *THOUGHT* OF IT! IT *MUST* BE A WOMAN. IT *HAS* TO BE, BY GOD! IT... *LISTEN...*

FAR AWAY, UNDER THE STARS, A PHONE RANG...

HE RAN. HE STOPPED TO LISTEN... THE RINGING, LOUDER. HE RACED DOWN AN ALLEY. LOUDER STILL! HE CHOSE A HOUSE. THE PHONE RANG INSIDE. HE JERKED THE DOORKNOB...

THE PHONE SCREAMED INSIDE. HE HEAVED A PORCH CHAIR THROUGH THE PARLOR WINDOW...

HE LEAPED IN AFTER IT. BEFORE HE EVEN TOUCHED THE PHONE, IT WAS SILENT...

HE STALKED THROUGH THE HOUSE THEN AND BROKE MIRRORS, TORE DOWN DRAPES, AND KICKED IN THE KITCHEN STOVE...

FINALLY, EXHAUSTED, HE PICKED UP THE THIN DIRECTORY WHICH LISTED EVERY PHONE ON MARS. *FIFTY THOUSAND NAMES.* HE STARTED WITH NUMBER ONE. *AMELIA AMES.* HE DIALED HER NUMBER IN NEW CHICAGO, ONE HUNDRED MILES OVER THE DEAD SEA. NO ANSWER. NUMBER TWO LIVED IN NEW NEW YORK, FIVE THOUSAND MILES ACROSS THE BLUE MOUNTAINS. NO ANSWER. HE CALLED THREE, FOUR, FIVE, SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT. A WOMAN'S VOICE ANSWERED...

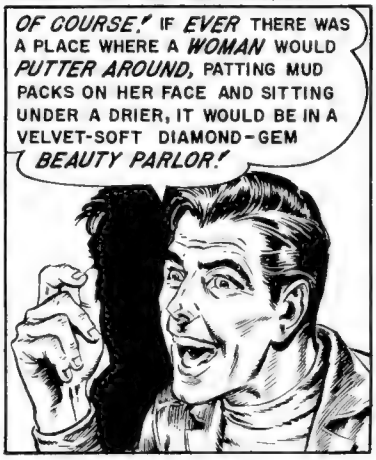
THE WOMAN'S VOICE RECITED...

THIS IS A *RECORDING*, MISS *HELEN ARASUMIAN* IS *NOT* AT *HOME*. WILL YOU LEAVE A *MESSAGE* ON THE *WIRE RECORDER?* HELLO? THIS IS A *RECORDING*. MISS *HELEN ARASUMIAN* IS *NOT* AT *HOME*. WILL YOU LEAVE A *MESSAGE*...
3

HE HUNG UP. HE SAT WITH HIS MOUTH TWITCHING. ON SECOND THOUGHT HE REDIALED THE NUMBER...

HE PHONED MARS JUNCTION, NEW BOSTON, ARCADIA, AND ROOSEVELT CITY EXCHANGES, THEORIZING THAT THEY WOULD BE LOGICAL PLACES FOR PERSONS TO DIAL FROM...

SUDDENLY HE STOPPED, CLAPPED HIS HANDS TOGETHER AND LAUGHED...


OF COURSE! IF EVER THERE WAS A PLACE WHERE A WOMAN WOULD PUTTER AROUND, PATTING MUD PACKS ON HER FACE AND SITTING UNDER A DRIER, IT WOULD BE IN A VELVET-SOFT DIAMOND-GEM BEAUTY PARLOR!

HE CHECKED THE DIRECTORY AND DIALED A LONG DISTANCE CALL THROUGH TO THE BIGGEST BEAUTY PARLOR IN NEW TEXAS CITY. SOMEONE AT THE OTHER END LIFTED THE RECEIVER. A WOMAN'S VOICE SAID...

THE WOMAN GAVE A DELIGHTED LITTLE SCREAM...

SHE WEPT INTO THE RECEIVER...

HER VOICE WAS SO KIND AND SWEET AND FINE. HE HELD THE PHONE TIGHT TO HIS EAR. HE FELT HIS CHEEKS BURN...

SUDDENLY THERE WAS A BUZZ... 4

SOMEWHERE A WIND HAD BLOWN DOWN A POLE. AS QUICKLY AS SHE HAD COME, GENEVIEVE SELSOR WAS GONE...

HE JIGGLED THE BUTTONS. NOTHING...

HE DIALED BUT THE LINE WAS DEAD. HE RAN OUT OF THE HOUSE. THE SUN WAS JUST RISING AS HE BACKED THE BEETLE-CAR FROM THE STRANGER'S GARAGE...

AT SUNSET, AFTER AN IMPOSSIBLE DAY OF DRIVING, HE PULLED TO THE ROADSIDE, KICKED OFF HIS SHOES, AND LAID HIMSELF OUT ON THE SEAT...

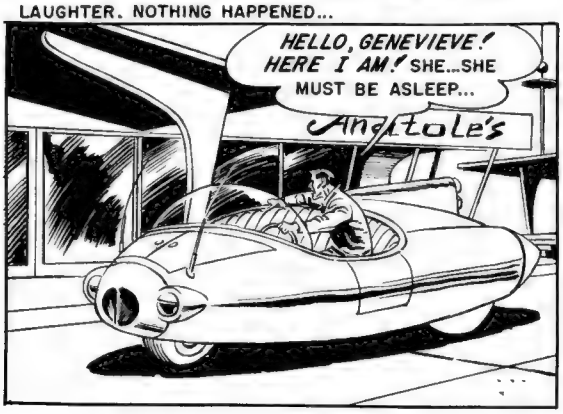
HE LAY IN THE HALF-PLACE BETWEEN AWAKENESS AND DREAMS. HE WHISPERED...

HE SANG SOFTLY AND THERE WAS A WARMTH WITHIN HIM...

HE HEARD HER VOICE AND, SIGHING, PUT UP A HAND TO TOUCH HER IN THE MOONLIGHT. LONG, DARK, HAIR SHAKING IN THE WIND; BEAUTIFUL IT WAS. AND HER LIPS LIKE RED PEPPERMINTS. AND HER CHEEKS LIKE FRESH-CUT WET ROSES. AND HER BODY LIKE A CLEAR VAPOROUS MIST, WHILE HER SOFT VOICE CROONED...

HE SLEPT...

TOWARDS DAWN, HE REACHED NEW TEXAS CITY. HE HALTED BEFORE THE DELUXE BEAUTY SALON, YELLING. HE EXPECTED HER TO RUSH OUT, ALL PERFUME, ALL LAUGHTER. NOTHING HAPPENED...



HE SWUNG THE GLASS DOOR WIDE AND STEPPED IN...

MAYBE... MAYBE *SHE* DROVE TO MARLIN VILLAGE, WHILE *I* WAS DRIVING *HERE!* SHE PROBABLY TOOK THE *OLD SEA ROAD.* WE *MISSED* EACH OTHER DURING THE *NIGHT.* HOW'D *SHE* KNOW I'D COME GET HER ? I DIDN'T *SAY* I WOULD! AND SHE WAS SO *AFRAID* WHEN WE WERE CUT OFF, THAT *SHE* RUSHED TO MARLIN VILLAGE TO FIND *ME!* AND HERE *I* AM, BY GOD, WHAT A *FOOL* I AM!

HE DROVE ALL DAY AND NIGHT, THINKING...

WHAT IF SHE *ISN'T* IN MARLIN VILLAGE *WAITING,* WHEN I *ARRIVE? NO!* SHE *MUST* BE THERE! SHE *MUST!* I'LL RUN UP TO HER, AND HOLD HER, AND PERHAPS EVEN *KISS* HER ON THE LIPS...

HE REACHED MARLIN VILLAGE AT DAWN. HE TURNED DOWN MAIN STREET, HONKING THE HORN, CALLING HER NAME IN THE EMPTY STREET...

GENEVIEVE! GENEVIEVE! WHERE...

COIFFURES

THE DOOR TO THE BEAUTY SALON OPENED...

GENEVIEVE STOOD IN THE OPEN DOOR OF THE SALON AS HE RAN ACROSS THE STREET. A BOX OF CREAM CHOCOLATES LAY OPEN IN HER ARMS. HER FINGERS, CUDDLING IT, WERE PLUMP AND PALID. HER FACE WAS ROUND AND THICK. HER LEGS WERE AS BIG AROUND AS THE STUMPS OF TREES. SHE HAD NO LIPS AT ALL AND COMPENSATED THIS BY STENCILING ON A LARGE RED, GREASY MOUTH...

SHE'D PLUCKED HER BROWS TO THIN ANTENNA LINES. HER HAIR WAS AN INDISCRIMINATE SHADE OF BROWN THAT HAD BEEN MADE AND REMADE, IT APPEARED, AS A NEST OF BIRDS. WALTER STOPPED. HIS SMILE DISSOLVED...

ARE *YOU... GENEVIEVE SELSOR?*

ARE *YOU WALTER GRIFF?*

GRIPP!

...WALTER GRIPP?

HIS EARS RANG...

HOW DO YOU DO?

HOW DO YOU DO?

SHE PUT OUT HER HAND. HE TOOK IT. HER FINGERS WERE STICKY WITH CHOCOLATE...

6

IT WAS NINE O'CLOCK AT NIGHT. THEY'D SPENT THE DAY PICNICKING AND SHOPPING IN THE SILENT STREETS. SHE'D BROKEN A WINDOW AND PUT ON THE BRIGHTEST DRESS SHE COULD FIND. DUMPING A PERFUME BOTTLE ON HER HAIR, SHE'D RESEMBLED A DROWNED SHEEPDOG...

I NEVER LIKED MY FOLKS, THEY WERE FOOLS. THEY LEFT FOR EARTH TWO MONTHS AGO. I WAS SUPPOSED TO FOLLOW, BUT I STAYED ON; YOU KNOW WHY?
WHY?

BECAUSE EVERYONE PICKED ON ME. SO I STAYED WHERE I COULD THROW PERFUME ON MYSELF ALL DAY AND DRINK TEN THOUSAND MALTS AND EAT CANDY WITHOUT PEOPLE SAYING 'OH, THAT'S FULL OF CALORIES!' SO HERE I AM...
HERE YOU ARE!

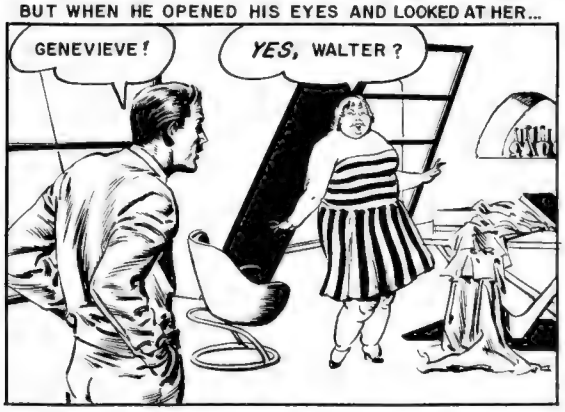
SHE LOOKED AT HIM...

SHE GLANCED UP AT HIM WITH SLY BRIGHT EYES...

SHE LED HIM INTO THE BEAUTY SHOP AND OVER TO A LARGE WHITE BOX. SHE UNTIED PINK RIBBON, LIFTED THE LID, FOLDED BACK CRISP LAYERS OF WHISPERY TISSUE...

WALTER GRIPP STARED. HE BEGAN TO TREMBLE...

WALTER SHUT HIS EYES. HER VOICE WAS SOFT AND COOL AND SWEET AS IT HAD BEEN ON THE PHONE, BUT WHEN HE OPENED HIS EYES AND LOOKED AT HER...



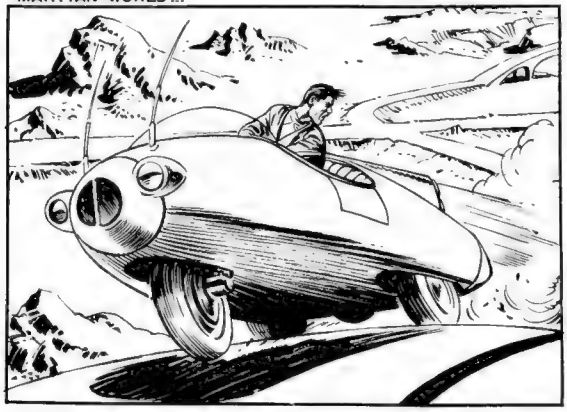
HE GLANCED AT THE DOOR, BACKING TOWARD IT...

SHE DRIFTED TOWARD HIM, THE PERFUME SMELL THICK ABOUT HER ROUND WHITE FACE...

HE WAS OUT THE DOOR AND INTO HIS CAR BEFORE SHE COULD SCREAM.

THE CAR WHIRLED AWAY DOWN THE SILENT STREET...

HE DROVE ALL NIGHT AND ALL DAY FOR THREE NIGHTS AND DAYS. ONCE HE THOUGHT HE SAW A CAR FOLLOWING, AND HE BROKE INTO A SHIVERING SWEAT AND TOOK ANOTHER HIGHWAY, CUTTING OFF ACROSS THE LONELY MARTIAN WORLD...

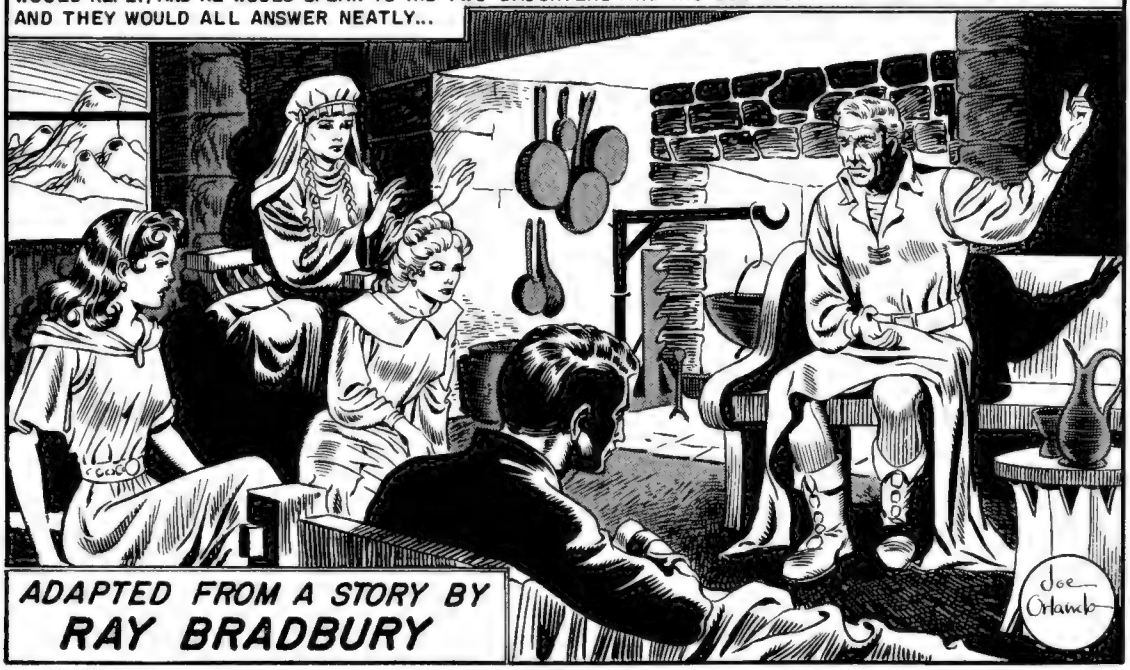


WHEN HE HAD PUT TEN THOUSAND MILES BETWEEN HIMSELF AND MARLIN VILLAGE, HE PULLED INTO A SMALL TOWN NAMED HOLTVILLE SPRINGS. AND HE'S LIVED THERE EVER SINCE, WITH TWO DEEP FREEZES PACKED WITH FOOD TO LAST HIM ONE HUNDRED YEARS, AND ENOUGH GOOD CIGARS TO LAST TEN THOUSAND DAYS, AND A BED WITH A SOFT MATTRESS...

...AND WHEN, ONCE IN A WHILE OVER THE LONG YEARS, THE PHONE RINGS...HE DOESN'T ANSWER. -THE END-

The LONG YEARS!

WHENEVER THE WIND CAME THROUGH THE MARTIAN SKY, HE AND HIS FAMILY WOULD SIT IN THEIR STONE HUT AND WARM THEIR HANDS OVER A WOOD FIRE! THE WIND WOULD STIR THE CANAL WATERS AND ALMOST BLOW THE STARS OUT OF THE SKY, BUT MR. HATHAWAY WOULD SIT CONTENTED AND TALK TO HIS WIFE, AND HIS WIFE WOULD REPLY, AND HE WOULD SPEAK TO HIS TWO DAUGHTERS AND HIS SON ABOUT THE OLD DAYS ON EARTH, AND THEY WOULD ALL ANSWER NEATLY...



ADAPTED FROM A STORY BY
RAY BRADBURY

MR. HATHAWAY WENT OUT INTO THE MARTIAN NIGHT! IT WAS THE TWENTIETH YEAR AFTER THE GREAT WAR! MARS WAS A TOMB PLANET! WHETHER OR NOT EARTH WAS THE SAME WAS A MATTER OF MUCH DEBATE FOR HATHAWAY AND HIS FAMILY ON THOSE LONG MARTIAN NIGHTS! HE CALLED INTO THE HUT...

HATHAWAY GAZED UP AT EARTH BURNING GREEN IN THE WINDY SKY! THEN HE LOOKED ACROSS THE LONG-DEAD SEA BOTTOMS...

HATHAWAY MOVED QUIETLY DOWN THROUGH THE SERIES OF RUINS...

WELL, I'M GOOD FOR *ANOTHER* TWENTY YEARS IF I'M CAREFUL! *SOMEONE* MIGHT COME! EITHER *ACROSS* THE DEAD SEAS OR OUT OF *SPACE* IN A *ROCKET* ON A LITTLE THREAD OF RED FLAME!

HE CAME TO A SOLITARY MARTIAN GRAVEYARD... A SERIES OF SMALL HEXAGONAL STONES ON A HILL SWEPT BY A LONELY WIND! HE LOOKED DOWN AT THE GRAVES WITH CRUDE WOODEN CROSSES ON THEM, AND NAMES...

TEARS DID NOT COME TO MR. HATHAWAY'S EYES! THEY HAD DRIED LONG AGO...

DO YOU *FORGIVE* ME FOR WHAT I'VE *DONE*? I WAS VERY MUCH *ALONE*! YOU *DO* UNDERSTAND, *DON'T* YOU?

HE RETURNED TO THE STONE HUT... AND ONCE MORE, JUST BEFORE GOING IN, SHADED HIS EYES, SEARCHING THE BLACK SKY...

ONE KEEPS *WAITING* AND *WAITING* AND *LOOKING*, AND *ONE* NIGHT, *PERHAPS*...

THERE WAS A TINY RED FLAME ON THE SKY! HE STEPPED AWAY FROM THE LIGHT OF THE HUT...

...AND ONE LOOKS *AGAIN*!

THE TINY RED FLAME WAS STILL THERE...

IT WASN'T THERE *LAST* NIGHT!

HE STUMBLED AND FELL, PICKED HIMSELF UP, RAN BEHIND THE HUT, SWIVELED THE TELESCOPE, AND POINTED IT AT THE SKY...

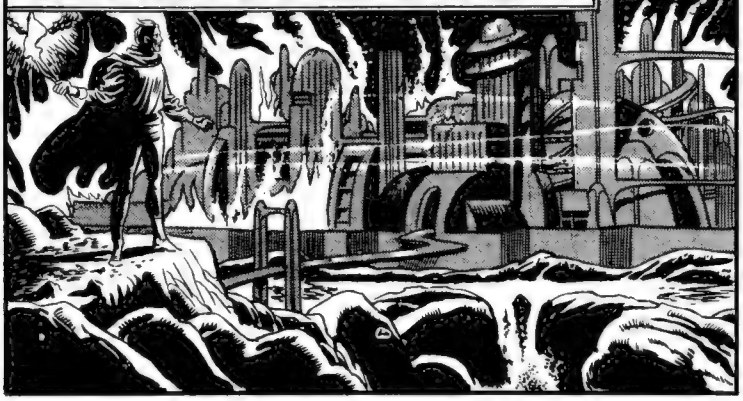
A MINUTE LATER... AFTER A LONG, WILD STARING... HE APPEARED IN THE LOW DOOR OF THE HUT! THE WIFE AND THE TWO DAUGHTERS AND THE SON TURNED THEIR HEADS TO HIM! FINALLY HE WAS ABLE TO SPEAK...

I HAVE *GOOD NEWS*! I HAVE LOOKED AT THE *SKY*! A *ROCKET* IS COMING TO TAKE US ALL *HOME*! IT WILL BE HERE IN THE EARLY MORNING!

THEN, MR. HATHAWAY BEGAN TO CRY GENTLY...

2

HE BURNED WHAT WAS LEFT OF *NEW* NEW YORK THAT MORNING AT THREE! HE TOOK A TORCH AND MOVED INTO THE PLASTIC CITY, AND, WITH THE FLAME, TOUCHED THE WALLS HERE AND THERE! THE CITY BLOOMED UP IN GREAT TOSSES OF HEAT AND LIGHT! IT WAS A SQUARE MILE OF ILLUMINATION, BIG ENOUGH TO BE SEEN OUT IN SPACE! IT WOULD BECKON THE ROCKET DOWN TO MR. HATHAWAY AND HIS FAMILY...



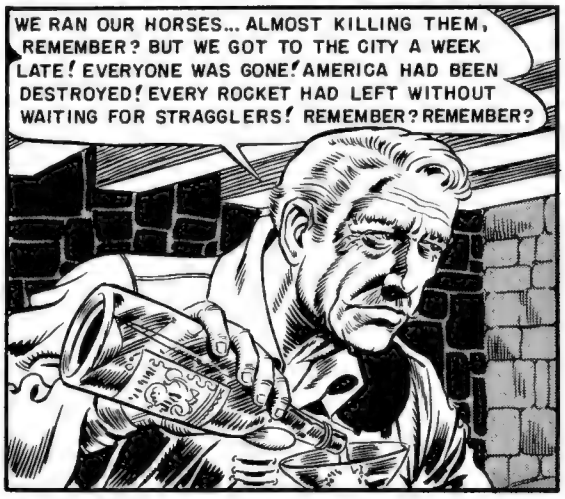
HIS HEART BEATING RAPIDLY WITH PAIN, HE RETURNED TO THE HUT! HE HELD UP A DUSTY BOTTLE INTO THE LIGHT...

SEE? *WINE* I SAVED, JUST FOR TONIGHT! I KNEW THAT SOMEDAY SOMEONE WOULD FIND US! WE'LL HAVE A *DRINK* TO *CELEBRATE!*

HE POURED FIVE GLASSES FULL...

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME! REMEMBER THE DAY THE WAR BROKE? TWENTY YEARS AND SEVEN MONTHS AGO! AND ALL THE ROCKETS WERE CALLED HOME FROM MARS! AND YOU AND I AND THE CHILDREN WERE OUT IN THE MOUNTAINS...

WE RAN OUR HORSES... ALMOST KILLING THEM, REMEMBER? BUT WE GOT TO THE CITY A WEEK LATE! EVERYONE WAS GONE! AMERICA HAD BEEN DESTROYED! EVERY ROCKET HAD LEFT WITHOUT WAITING FOR STRAGGLERS! REMEMBER? REMEMBER?



HE LIFTED HIS GLASS...

AND IT TURNED OUT WE WERE THE *ONLY* ONES LEFT! LORD, LORD, HOW THE YEARS *PASS!* I COULDN'T HAVE *STOOD* IT WITHOUT *YOU* HERE... *ALL* OF YOU! I'D HAVE *KILLED* MYSELF *WITHOUT* YOU! BUT *WITH* YOU... IT WAS WORTH WAITING! HERE'S TO US, THEN... AND TO OUR LONG WAIT TOGETHER!

HE DRANK! THE WIFE AND THE TWO DAUGHTERS AND THE SON RAISED THEIR GLASSES TO THEIR LIPS! THE WINE RAN DOWN OVER THE CHINS OF ALL FOUR OF THEM...

3

HE HURRIED ACROSS THE LAND TO THE VAST METAL STORAGE SHED! INSIDE WAS THE COLD-STORAGE UNIT AND POWER PLANT HE'D REPAIRED AND RESTORED, JUST AS HE'D REPAIRED CLOCKS, TELEPHONES, AND SPOOL-RECORDERS OVER THE YEARS IN HIS SPARE TIME! THE SHED WAS FULL OF THINGS HE'D BUILT! FROM THE DEEP FREEZE, HE FETCHED RIMED CARTONS OF BEANS AND STRAWBERRIES AND A CHICKEN TWENTY YEARS OLD...

THE AIR WAS FULL OF COOKING ODORS WHEN THE ROCKET LANDED! LIKE A BOY, HATHAWAY RACED DOWN THE HILL! HE STOPPED ONCE BECAUSE OF A SUDDEN SICK PAIN IN HIS CHEST! HE SAT ON A ROCK TO REGAIN HIS BREATH, THEN RAN ALL THE REST OF THE WAY! HE STOOD IN THE HOT ATMOSPHERE GENERATED BY THE FIERY ROCKET! A PORT OPENED! A MAN LOOKED DOWN...

CAPTAIN...WILDER!

CAPTAIN WILDER JUMPED DOWN AND STOOD THERE LOOKING AT THE OLD MAN...

GOOD LORD! *HATHAWAY*... FROM MY *OLD* CREW... FROM THE *FOURTH EXPEDITION!*

IT'S BEEN A *LONG TIME*, CAPTAIN! I'M *OLD!*

I'M NOT YOUNG *MYSELF* ANY MORE! I'VE BEEN OUT TO JUPITER AND SATURN AND NEPTUNE FOR TWENTY YEARS!

THEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT'S *HAPPENED*...

I CAN GUESS! WE'VE CIRCLED MARS TWICE! IT'S PRETTY WELL DEAD...NOT ANOTHER SOUL ALIVE! WHAT ABOUT EARTH?

YOU KNOW AS MUCH AS I DO! ARE YOU GOING BACK, SIR?

YES! WE'RE *CURIOUS*, OF COURSE! WE'LL WANT TO SEE EARTH, NO MATTER *WHAT!*

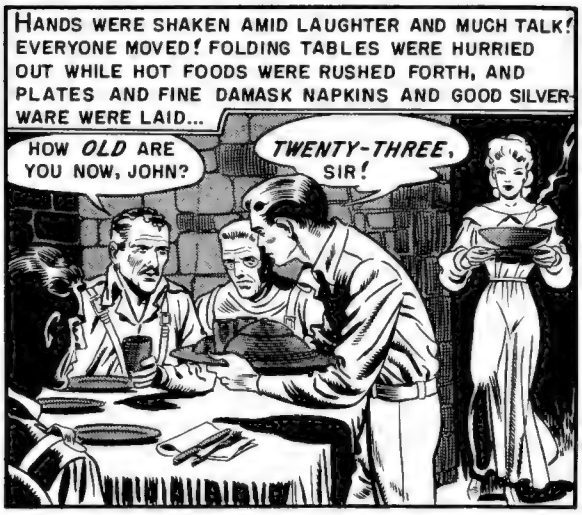
WILL YOU TAKE US *WITH* YOU?

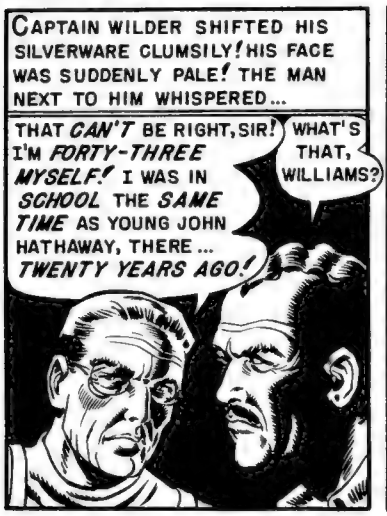
OF COURSE! YOUR *WIFE!* I *REMEMBER* HER! *TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO*, WASN'T IT? AND THERE WERE *CHILDREN!*

MY *SON* AND *TWO DAUGHTERS!* THEY'RE UP AT OUR HUT! THERE'S A FINE *BREAKFAST* WAITING ALL OF YOU! *COME!*

4

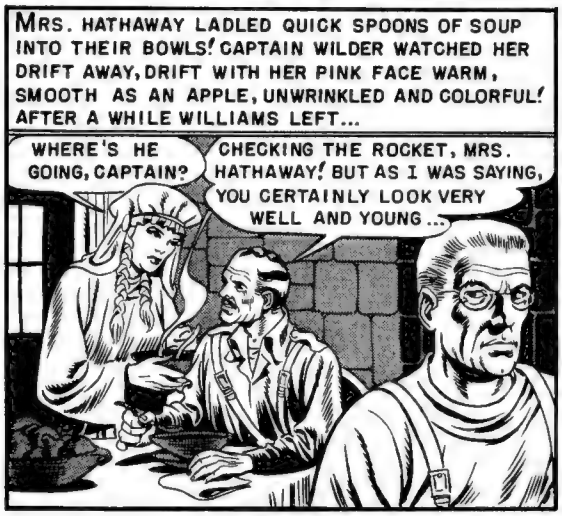
THEY WALKED ON UP THE HILL TO THE HUT! HATHAWAY'S WIFE APPEARED, FOLLOWED BY THE TWO DAUGHTERS, TALL AND GRACIOUS, AND AN EVEN TALLER SON...
ALICE! YOU REMEMBER CAPTAIN WILDER?
OF...COURSE, CAPTAIN WILDER! MY DAUGHTERS, MARGUERITE AND SUSAN! MY SON, JOHN! YOU REMEMBER THE CAPTAIN, SURELY, CHILDREN?

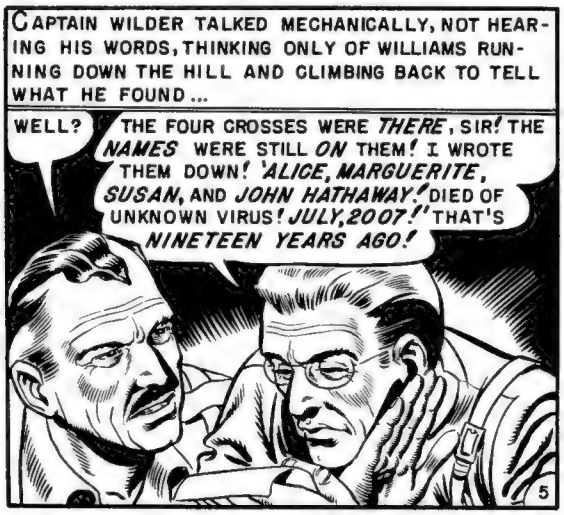

HANDS WERE SHAKEN AMID LAUGHTER AND MUCH TALK! EVERYONE MOVED! FOLDING TABLES WERE HURRIED OUT WHILE HOT FOODS WERE RUSHED FORTH, AND PLATES AND FINE DAMASK NAPKINS AND GOOD SILVERWARE WERE LAID...
HOW OLD ARE YOU NOW, JOHN?
TWENTY-THREE, SIR!


CAPTAIN WILDER SHIFTED HIS SILVERWARE CLUMSILY! HIS FACE WAS SUDDENLY PALE! THE MAN NEXT TO HIM WHISPERED...
THAT CAN'T BE RIGHT, SIR! I'M FORTY-THREE MYSELF! I WAS IN SCHOOL THE SAME TIME AS YOUNG JOHN HATHAWAY, THERE... TWENTY YEARS AGO!
WHAT'S THAT, WILLIAMS?

HE SAYS HE'S ONLY TWENTY-THREE NOW! HE ONLY LOOKS TWENTY-THREE! BUT THAT'S WRONG! HE SHOULD BE FORTY-TWO, AT LEAST!
THE DAUGHTERS, TOO! I SAW THEM TWENTY YEARS AGO! THEY HAVEN'T CHANGED... NOT A WRINKLE!

WILL YOU DO ME A FAVOR, WILLIAMS? I WANT YOU TO RUN AN ERRAND! I'LL TELL YOU WHERE TO GO! IT ISN'T FAR FROM HERE! I SAW IT FROM THE ROCKET...
HERE! WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT SO SERIOUSLY? SMILE NOW! WE'RE GOING HOME!

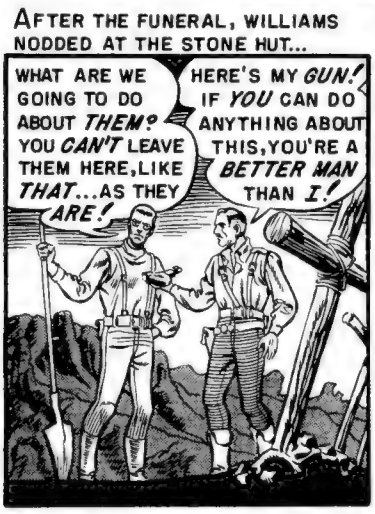

MRS. HATHAWAY LADLED QUICK SPOONS OF SOUP INTO THEIR BOWLS! CAPTAIN WILDER WATCHED HER DRIFT AWAY, DRIFT WITH HER PINK FACE WARM, SMOOTH AS AN APPLE, UNWRINKLED AND COLORFUL! AFTER A WHILE WILLIAMS LEFT...
WHERE'S HE GOING, CAPTAIN?
CHECKING THE ROCKET, MRS. HATHAWAY! BUT AS I WAS SAYING, YOU CERTAINLY LOOK VERY WELL AND YOUNG...

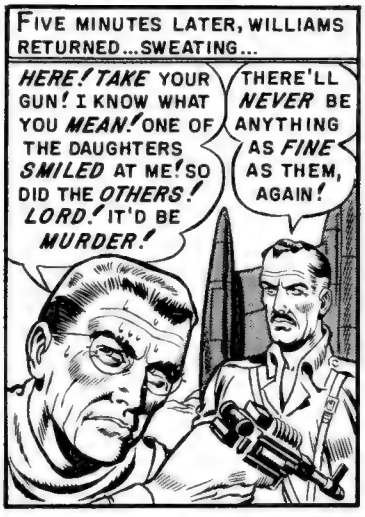

CAPTAIN WILDER TALKED MECHANICALLY, NOT HEARING HIS WORDS, THINKING ONLY OF WILLIAMS RUNNING DOWN THE HILL AND CLIMBING BACK TO TELL WHAT HE FOUND...
WELL?
THE FOUR CROSSES WERE THERE, SIR! THE NAMES WERE STILL ON THEM! I WROTE THEM DOWN! 'ALICE, MARGUERITE, SUSAN, AND JOHN HATHAWAY! DIED OF UNKNOWN VIRUS! JULY, 2007!' THAT'S NINETEEN YEARS AGO!
5

HATHAWAY STOOD UP...
A TOAST TO ALL OF YOU! IT'S GOOD TO BE WITH FRIENDS AGAIN! AND TO MY WIFE AND CHILDREN, WITHOUT WHOM I COULDN'T HAVE SURVIVED ALONE! IT IS ONLY...THROUGH...
HE DID NOT CRY OUT AS HE FELL FORWARD OVER THE TABLE AND SLIPPED TO THE GROUND! WILDER KNELT AND TOOK THE OLD MAN'S HAND! HATHAWAY'S VOICE WAS BARELY AUDIBLE...
I...I SPOILED THE BREAKFAST! SAY GOOD-BYE TO ALICE... AND THE CHILDREN...
I'LL CALL THEM!
NO! NO! DON'T! THEY WOULDN'T UNDER-STAND! I WOULDN'T WANT THEM TO UNDERSTAND! DON'T! I...I...
HATHAWAY!
HE WAS DEAD! WILDER AROSE, WENT TO ALICE HATHAWAY, AND LOOKED INTO HER FACE...
DO YOU KNOW WHAT HAS JUST HAPPENED?
SOMETHING ABOUT MY HUSBAND!
HE HAS JUST PASSED AWAY! HIS HEART...
I'M SORRY!
HOW DO YOU FEEL?
HE DIDN'T WANT US TO FEEL BADLY! HE TOLD US IT WOULD HAPPEN SOMEDAY, AND HE DIDN'T WANT US TO CRY!
HE DIDN'T TEACH US HOW, YOU KNOW! HE DIDN'T WANT US TO KNOW HOW TO CRY! HE SAID IT WAS THE WORST THING THAT COULD HAPPEN TO A MAN TO KNOW HOW TO BE LONELY AND KNOW HOW TO BE SAD AND THEN TO CRY! SO WE WEREN'T TO KNOW WHAT CRYING IS...OR BEING SAD!
MR. HATHAWAY DID A FINE JOB ON YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN!
HE WOULD HAVE LIKED TO HEAR YOU SAY THAT! HE WAS SO PROUD OF US! AFTER A WHILE, HE EVEN FORGOT THAT HE MADE US! AT THE END HE LOVED AND TOOK US AS HIS REAL WIFE AND CHILDREN! AND, IN A WAY, WE ARE!
YOU GAVE HIM A GOOD DEAL OF COMFORT!
6

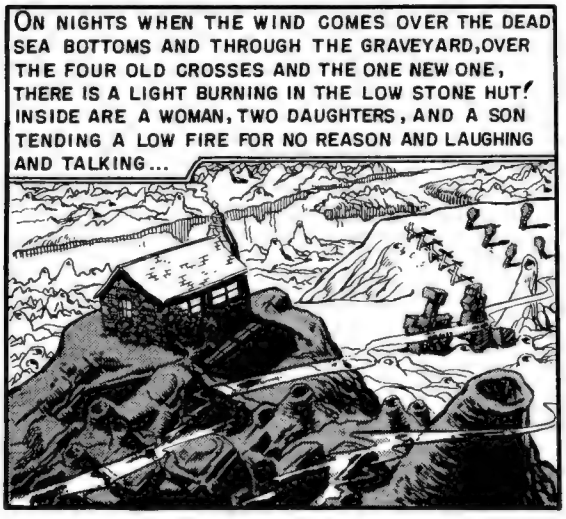
YES! FOR YEARS ON END WE SAT AND TALKED! HE LOVED TO TALK! HE LIKED THE STONE HUT AND THE OPEN FIRE! WE COULD HAVE LIVED IN A MORE MODERN HOUSE IN THE DESERTED CITY, BUT HE LIKED IT UP HERE! HE TOLD ME ALL ABOUT HIS LABORATORY AND THE THINGS HE DID IN IT! HE WOULD SIT AND LIGHT A CIGAR AND TALK TO US! THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING HE COULDN'T MAKE US DO!

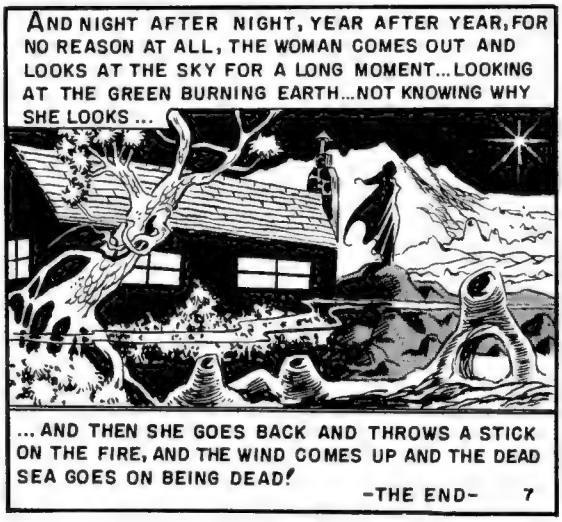
HE COULDN'T MAKE US GROW OLD! HE GOT OLDER EVERY DAY, BUT WE STAYED THE SAME! I GUESS HE DIDN'T MIND! I GUESS HE WANTED US THIS WAY!
WE'LL BURY HIM DOWN IN THE CEMETERY WHERE THE OTHER FOUR CORPSES ARE! I THINK HE WOULD LIKE THAT!


AFTER THE FUNERAL, WILLIAMS NODDED AT THE STONE HUT...
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO ABOUT *THEM*? YOU *CAN'T* LEAVE THEM HERE, LIKE *THAT*... AS THEY *ARE*!
HERE'S MY *GUN*! IF *YOU* CAN DO ANYTHING ABOUT THIS, YOU'RE A *BETTER MAN* THAN *I*!


FIVE MINUTES LATER, WILLIAMS RETURNED... SWEATING...
HERE! *TAKE* YOUR GUN! I KNOW WHAT YOU *MEAN*! ONE OF THE DAUGHTERS *SMILED* AT ME! SO DID THE *OTHERS*! *LORD*! IT'D BE *MURDER*!
THERE'LL *NEVER* BE ANYTHING AS *FINE* AS THEM, AGAIN!

THEY'RE BUILT TO *LAST*! *TEN*... *FIFTY*... *TWO HUNDRED YEARS*! YES, THEY'VE AS *MUCH* RIGHT TO... TO *LIFE* AS *YOU* OR *I*! WELL... GET *ABOARD*!


ON NIGHTS WHEN THE WIND COMES OVER THE DEAD SEA BOTTOMS AND THROUGH THE GRAVEYARD, OVER THE FOUR OLD CROSSES AND THE ONE NEW ONE, THERE IS A LIGHT BURNING IN THE LOW STONE HUT! INSIDE ARE A WOMAN, TWO DAUGHTERS, AND A SON TENDING A LOW FIRE FOR NO REASON AND LAUGHING AND TALKING...


AND NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, YEAR AFTER YEAR, FOR NO REASON AT ALL, THE WOMAN COMES OUT AND LOOKS AT THE SKY FOR A LONG MOMENT... LOOKING AT THE GREEN BURNING EARTH... NOT KNOWING WHY SHE LOOKS...
... AND THEN SHE GOES BACK AND THROWS A STICK ON THE FIRE, AND THE WIND COMES UP AND THE DEAD SEA GOES ON BEING DEAD!
-THE END- 7

there will come soft rains...

THE SUN CAME OUT FROM BEHIND THE RAIN. THE HOUSE STOOD ALONE IN A CITY OF RUBBLE AND ASHES. THIS WAS THE ONE HOUSE LEFT STANDING! AT NIGHT, THE RUINED CITY GAVE OFF A RADIOACTIVE GLOW WHICH COULD BE SEEN FOR MILES. THE ENTIRE WEST FACE OF THE HOUSE WAS BLACK, SAVE FOR FIVE PLACES. HERE, THE WHITE SILHOUETTE OF A MAN MOWED A LAWN. THERE, AS IN A PHOTOGRAPH, A WOMAN BENT TO PICK FLOWERS. STILL FARTHER OVER, THEIR IMAGES OUTLINED IN ONE TITANIC INSTANT, A SMALL BOY, HANDS FLUNG INTO THE AIR...HIGHER UP, THE IMAGE OF A THROWN BALL...AND OPPOSITE HIM, A GIRL, HANDS RAISED TO CATCH THE BALL WHICH NEVER CAME DOWN...

ADAPTED FROM A STORY BY
RAY BRADBURY

THE FIVE SPOTS OF PAINT... THE MAN, THE WOMAN, THE CHILDREN, THE BALL REMAINED! THE REST WAS A CHARCOAL LAYER...

WOOD

THE MORNING HOUSE LAY EMPTY. IN THE LIVING ROOM, THE VOICE-CLOCK SANG, REPEATING AND REPEATING ITS SOUNDS INTO THE EMPTINESS...

TICK-TOCK! SEVEN O'CLOCK! TIME TO GET UP! TIME TO GET UP! SEVEN O'CLOCK...

IN THE KITCHEN, THE BREAKFAST STOVE GAVE A HISSING SIGH AND EJECTED FROM ITS WARM INTERIOR EIGHT PIECES OF PERFECTLY BROWNED TOAST, EIGHT EGGS SUNNYSIDE UP, SIXTEEN SLICES OF BACON, TWO COFFEES, AND TWO COOL GLASSES OF MILK...

SEVEN-NINE! BREAKFAST TIME! SEVEN-NINE...

SOMEWHERE IN THE WALLS, RELAYS CLICKED... MEMORY TAPES GLIDED UNDER ELECTRIC EYES...

TODAY IS AUGUST 4, 2026! TODAY IS MR. FEATHERSTONE'S BIRTHDAY! TODAY IS THE ANNIVERSARY OF TILITA'S MARRIAGE! INSURANCE IS PAYABLE... AS ARE THE WATER, GAS, AND LIGHT BILLS...

THE VOICE CLOCK SOUNDED AGAIN...

EIGHT-ONE! TICK-TOCK! EIGHT-ONE O'CLOCK! OFF TO SCHOOL! OFF TO WORK! RUN! RUN! EIGHT-ONE...

BUT NO DOORS SLAMMED. NO CARPETS TOOK THE SOFT TREAD OF RUBBER HEELS. IT WAS RAINING AGAIN OUTSIDE. THE WEATHER-BOX ON THE FRONT DOOR SANG QUIETLY...

RAIN, RAIN, GO AWAY! RUBBERS, RAINCOATS FOR TODAY...

OUTSIDE, THE GARAGE CHIMED AND LIFTED ITS DOORS TO REVEAL THE WAITING CAR...

AFTER A LONG WAIT, THE DOOR SWUNG DOWN AGAIN. AT EIGHT-THIRTY, THE EGGS WERE SHRIVELED AND THE TOAST WAS LIKE STONE. AN ALUMINUM WEDGE SCRAPED THEM INTO THE SINK...

...WHERE HOT WATER WHIRLED THEM DOWN A METAL THROAT WHICH DIGESTED AND FLUSHED THEM AWAY TO THE DISTANT SEA. THE DIRTY DISHES WERE DROPPED INTO A HOT WASHER AND EMERGED TWINKLING DRY...

NINE-FIFTEEN! TIME TO CLEAN!

OUT OF WARRENS IN THE WALL, TINY ROBOT MICE-LIKE THINGS DARTED. THE ROOMS WERE ACRAWL WITH THE SMALL CLEANING ANIMALS, ALL RUBBER AND METAL...

THEY THUDDED AGAINST CHAIRS, WHIRLING THEIR MUSTACHED RUNNERS, KNEADING THE RUG NAP, SUCKING GENTLY AT HIDDEN DUST. THEN, LIKE MYSTERIOUS INVADERS, THEY POPPED BACK INTO THEIR NOOKS. THEIR PINK ELECTRIC EYES FADED. THE HOUSE WAS CLEAN...

TEN-FIFTEEN. THE GARDEN SPRINKLERS CAME UP IN GOLDEN FOUNTS. THE WATER PELTED WINDOWPANES, RUNNING DOWN THE CHARRED WEST SIDE WHERE THE HOUSE HAD BEEN BURNED EVENLY FREE OF ITS WHITE PAINT...

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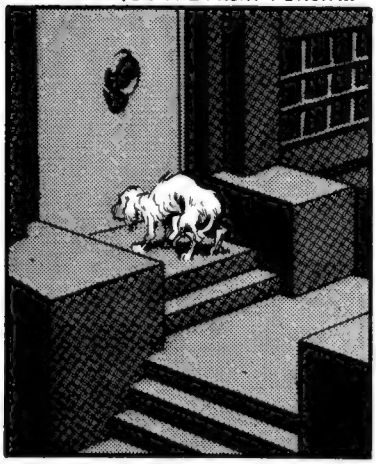
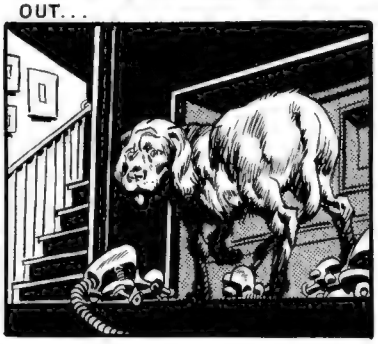
TWELVE NOON. A DOG WHINED, SHIVERING, ON THE FRONT PORCH...



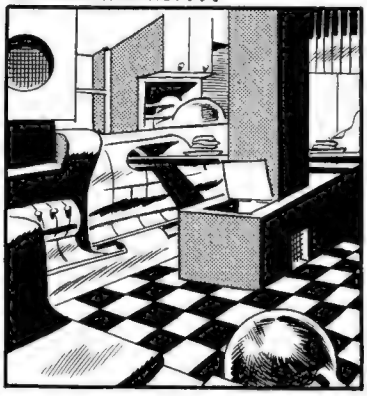
THE FRONT DOOR RECOGNIZED THE DOG'S VOICE AND OPENED. THE DOG, ONCE HUGE AND FLESHY, BUT NOW GONE TO BONE AND COVERED WITH SORES, MOVED INSIDE, TRACKING MUD...

BEHIND IT, ANGRY MICE WHIRRED... ANGRY AT HAVING TO PICK UP MUD... ANGRY AT INCONVENIENCE. FOR NOT A LEAF FRAGMENT BLEW UNDER THE DOOR BUT WHAT THE WALL PANELS FLIPPED OPEN AND THE SCRAP RATS FLASHED SWIFTLY OUT...



THE DOG RAN AROUND, HYSTERICALLY YELPING TO EACH DOOR, AT LAST REALIZING, AS THE HOUSE REALIZED, THAT ONLY SILENCE WAS HERE! IT SNIFFED THE AIR AND SCRATCHED AT THE KITCHEN DOOR...

BEHIND THE DOOR, THE STOVE WAS MAKING LUNCH... PANCAKES WHICH FILLED THE HOUSE WITH A RICH BAKING ODOR AND THE SCENT OF MAPLE SYRUP...

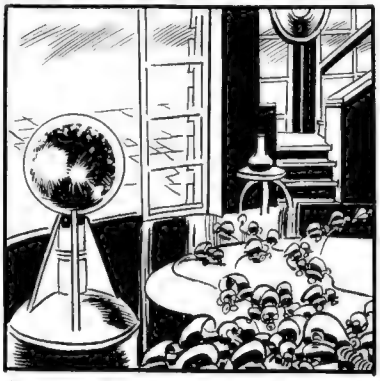


THE DOG FROTHED AT THE MOUTH, LYING AT THE DOOR, SNIFFING, ITS EYES TURNED TO FIRE...

IT RAN WILDLY IN CIRCLES, BITING ITS TAIL, SPUN IN A FRENZY...

...AND DIED! IT LAY IN THE HALLWAY FOR AN HOUR...

DELICATELY SENSING DECAY AT LAST, THE REGIMENTS OF MICE HUMMED OUT AS SOFTLY AS BLOWN LEAVES IN AN ELECTRICAL WIND...



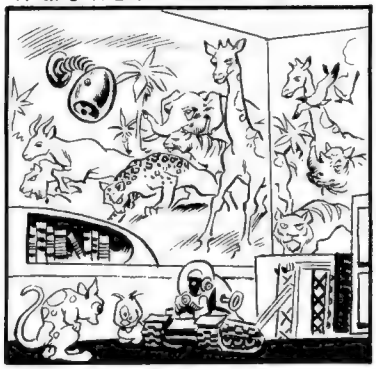
TWO-FIFTEEN. THE DOG WAS GONE! 3

IN THE CELLAR, THE INCINERATOR GLOWED SUDDENLY, AND A WHIRL OF SPARKS LEAPED UP THE CHIMNEY...

TWO THIRTY-FIVE. BRIDGE TABLES SPROUTED FROM PATIO WALLS. PLAYING CARDS FLUTTERED ONTO PADS IN A SHOWER OF PIPS. MARTINIS AND EGG SALAD SANDWICHES MANIFESTED ON AN OAKEN SERVER. MUSIC PLAYED...

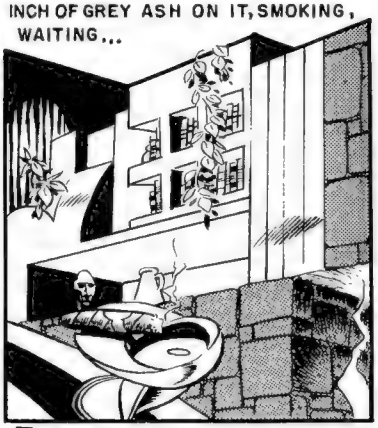
FOUR-O'CLOCK. THE TABLES FOLDED LIKE GREAT BUTTERFLIES BACK THROUGH PANEL WALLS...

FOUR-THIRTY. THE NURSERY WALLS GLOWED! ANIMALS TOOK SHAPE... YELLOW GIRAFFES, BLUE LIONS, PINK ANTELOPES, LILAC PANTHERS... CAVORTING IN CRYSTAL SUBSTANCE! IT WAS THE CHILDREN'S HOUR...

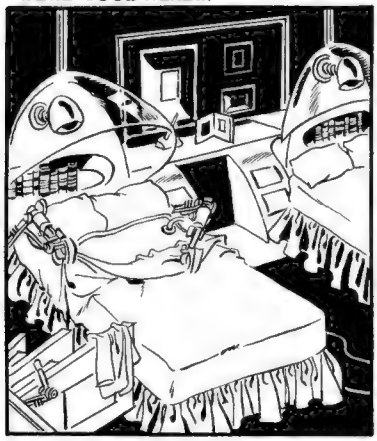


FIVE O'CLOCK. THE BATH FILLED WITH CLEAR HOT WATER...

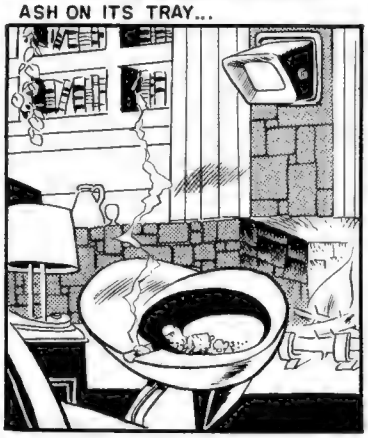
SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT O'CLOCK. DINNER. IN THE STUDY... A CLICK. A CIGAR POPPED UP IN THE METAL STAND OPPOSITE THE HEARTH... HALF AN INCH OF GREY ASH ON IT, SMOKING, WAITING...



NINE O'CLOCK. HIDDEN CIRCUITS WARMED THE BEDS, FOR NIGHTS WERE COOL HERE...

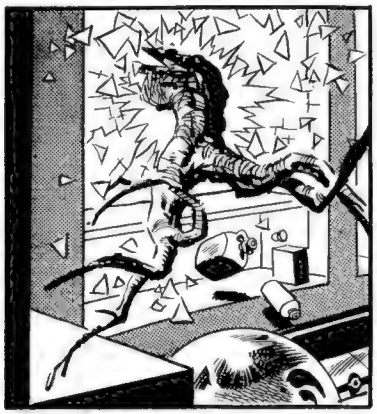


THE FIRE BURNED ON THE STONE HEARTH, AND THE CIGAR FELL AWAY INTO A MOUND OF QUIET ASH ON ITS TRAY...



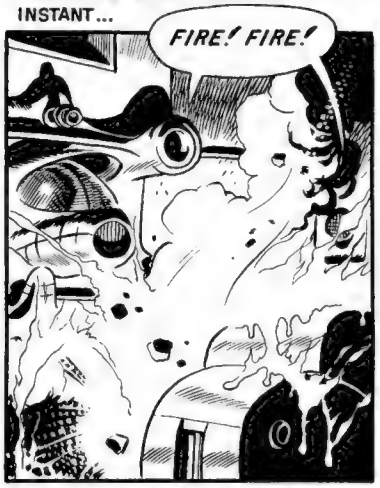
THE EMPTY CHAIRS FACED EACH OTHER BETWEEN THE SILENT WALLS. AND THE MUSIC PLAYED...

AT TEN O'CLOCK, THE HOUSE BEGAN TO DIE! THE WIND BLEW. A FALLING BOUGH CRASHED THROUGH THE KITCHEN WINDOW...



CLEANING SOLVENT, BOTTLED, SHATTERED OVER THE STOVE!

THE ROOM WAS ABLAZE IN AN INSTANT...

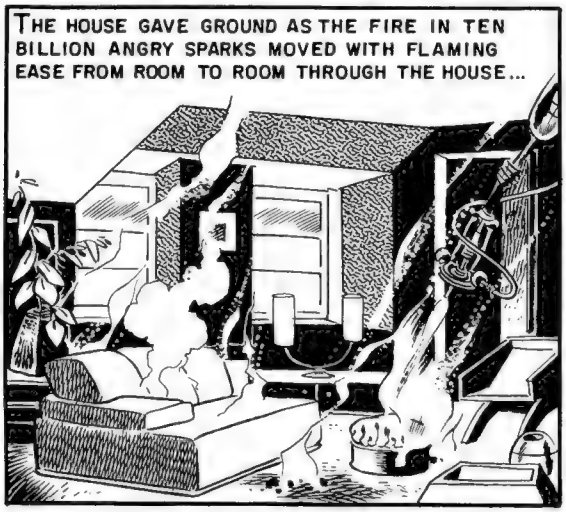


THE HOUSE LIGHTS FLASHED ON. WATER PUMPS SHOT FROM THE CEILINGS ...

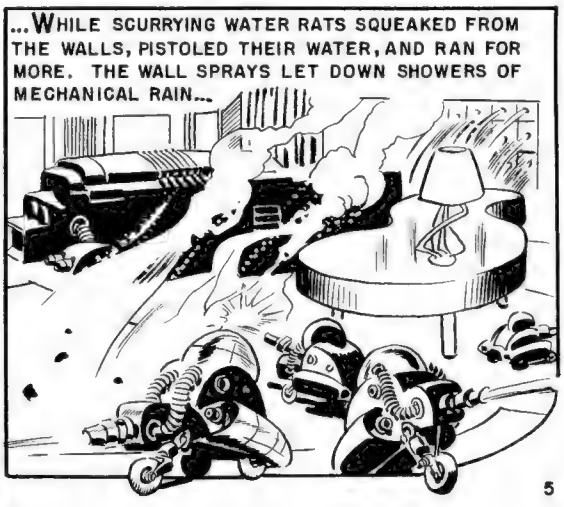
BUT THE SOLVENT SPREAD ON THE LINOLEUM, LICKING, EATING, UNDER THE KITCHEN DOOR, WHILE THE VOICES TOOK UP THE CHORUS...

THE HOUSE TRIED TO SAVE ITSELF. DOORS SPRANG TIGHTLY SHUT, BUT THE WINDOWS WERE BROKEN BY THE HEAT, AND THE WIND BLEW, SUCKING UPON THE FIRE...

THE HOUSE GAVE GROUND AS THE FIRE IN TEN BILLION ANGRY SPARKS MOVED WITH FLAMING EASE FROM ROOM TO ROOM THROUGH THE HOUSE...



...WHILE SCURRYING WATER RATS SQUEAKED FROM THE WALLS, PISTOLED THEIR WATER, AND RAN FOR MORE. THE WALL SPRAYS LET DOWN SHOWERS OF MECHANICAL RAIN...



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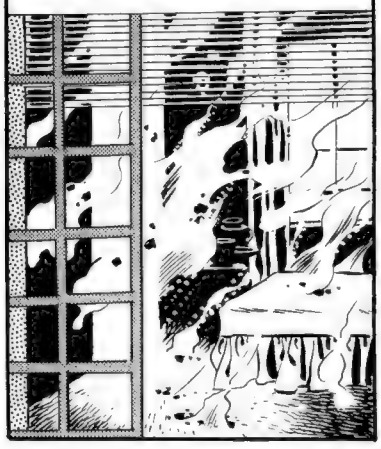
BUT IT WAS TOO LATE! SOMEWHERE, SIGHING, A PUMP SHRUGGED TO A STOP. THE QUENCHING RAINS CEASED. THE RESERVE WATER SUPPLY WHICH HAD FILLED BATHS AND WASHED DISHES FOR MANY QUIET DAYS, WAS GONE! THE FIRE CRACKLED ON...

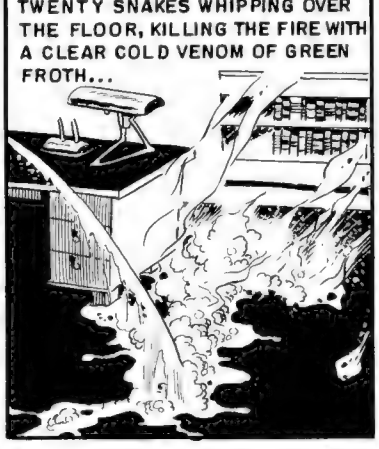
IT FED UPON PICASSOS AND MATISSES IN THE HALLS, LIKE DELICACIES, BAKING OFF THE OILY FLESH, TENDERLY CRISPING THE CANVASES INTO BLACK SHAVINGS...

NOW THE FIRE LAY IN BEDS, STOOD IN WINDOWS, CHANGING THE COLOR OF THE DRAPES...

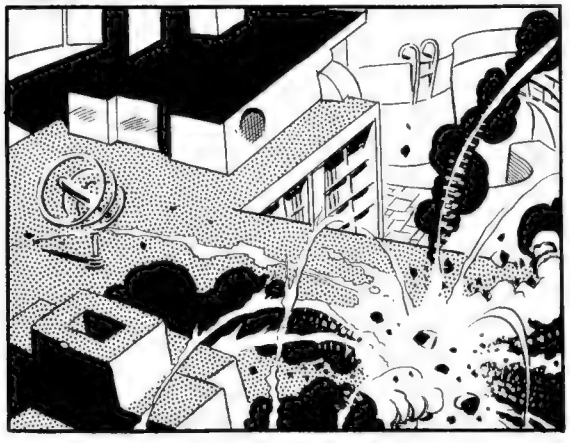


AND THEN REINFORCEMENTS! FROM ATTIC TRAPDOORS, BLIND ROBOT FACES PEERED DOWN WITH FAUCET-MOUTHS GUSHING GREEN CHEMICAL...

THE FIRE BACKED OFF, AS EVEN AN ELEPHANT MUST AT THE SIGHT OF A DEAD SNAKE. NOW THERE WERE TWENTY SNAKES WHIPPING OVER THE FLOOR, KILLING THE FIRE WITH A CLEAR COLD VENOM OF GREEN FROTH...

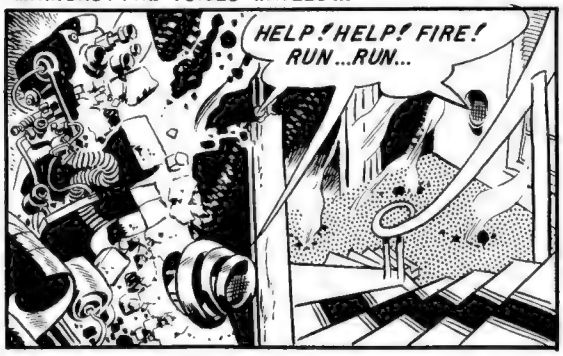


BUT THE FIRE WAS CLEVER! IT HAD SENT FLAMES OUTSIDE THE HOUSE, UP THROUGH THE ATTIC TO THE PUMPS THERE! AN EXPLOSION...

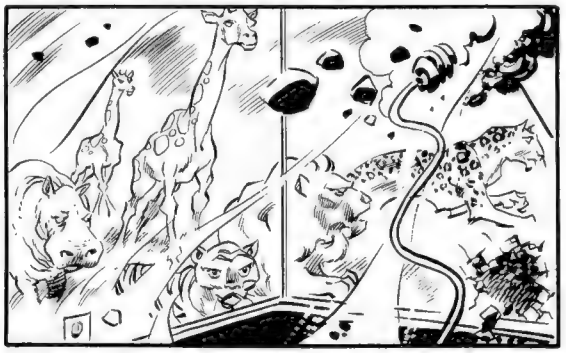


THE ATTIC BRAIN WHICH DIRECTED THE PUMPS WAS SHATTERED INTO BRONZE SHRAPNEL ON THE BEAMS. THE FIRE RUSHED BACK INTO EVERY CLOSET AND FELT OF THE CLOTHES HUNG THERE...

THE HOUSE SHUDDERED, OAK BONE ON BONE, ITS BARED SKELETON CRINGING FROM THE HEAT, ITS WIRES, ITS NERVES REVEALED AS IF A SURGEON HAD TORN THE SKIN OFF TO LET RED VEINS AND CAPILLARIES QUIVER IN THE SCALDING AIR. HEAT SNAPPED MIRRORS. THE VOICES WAILED...

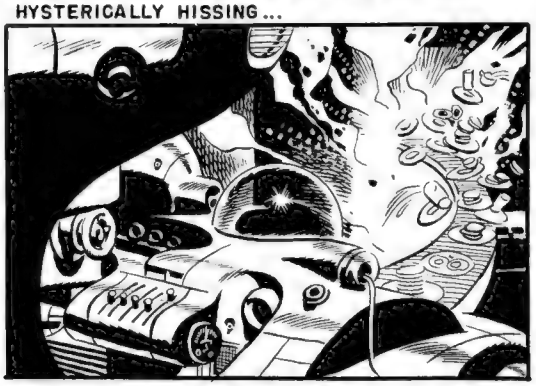


...LIKE A TRAGIC NURSERY RHYME. A DOZEN VOICES, HIGH, LOW, LIKE CHILDREN DYING IN A FOREST, ALONE, ALONE. AND THE VOICES FADED AS THE WIRES POPPED THEIR SHEATHINGS. IN THE NURSERY, THE BLUE LIONS ROARED, PURPLE GIRAFFES BOUNDED OFF, PANTHERS RAN IN CIRCLES, CHANGING COLOR...

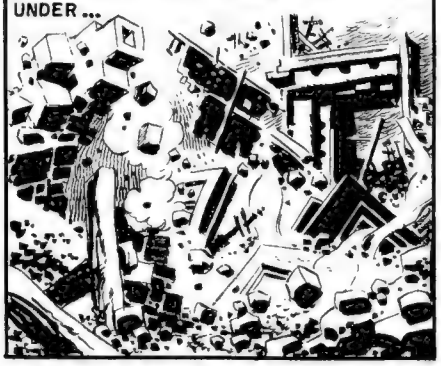


VOICES DIED. IN THE LAST INSTANT UNDER THE FIRE AVALANCHE, OTHER CHORUSES, OBLIVIOUS, COULD BE HEARD ANNOUNCING THE TIME, PLAYING MUSIC, REMINDING THE HOT FLAMES OF DUE BILLS. DOORS OPENED AND SLAMMED. A FEW LAST CLEANING MICE DARTED BRAVELY OUT TO CARRY AWAY THE HORRID ASHES...

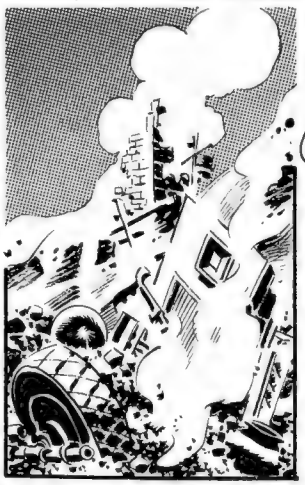
AND IN THE KITCHEN, AN INSTANT BEFORE THE RAIN OF FIRE AND TIMBER, THE STOVE COULD BE SEEN MAKING BREAKFAST AT A PSYCHOPATHIC RATE...TEN DOZEN EGGS, SIX LOAVES OF TOAST, TWENTY DOZEN BACON STRIPS, WHICH, EATEN BY FIRE STARTED THE STOVE WORKING AGAIN, HYSTERICALLY HISSING...



THE CRASH! THE ATTIC SMASHED INTO THE KITCHEN... THE KITCHEN INTO THE CELLAR... CELLAR INTO SUB-CELLAR. DEEP FREEZE, ARMCHAIR, FILM TAPES, CIRCUITS, BEDS, ALL LIKE SKELETONS THROWN IN A CLUTTERED MOUND DEEP UNDER...



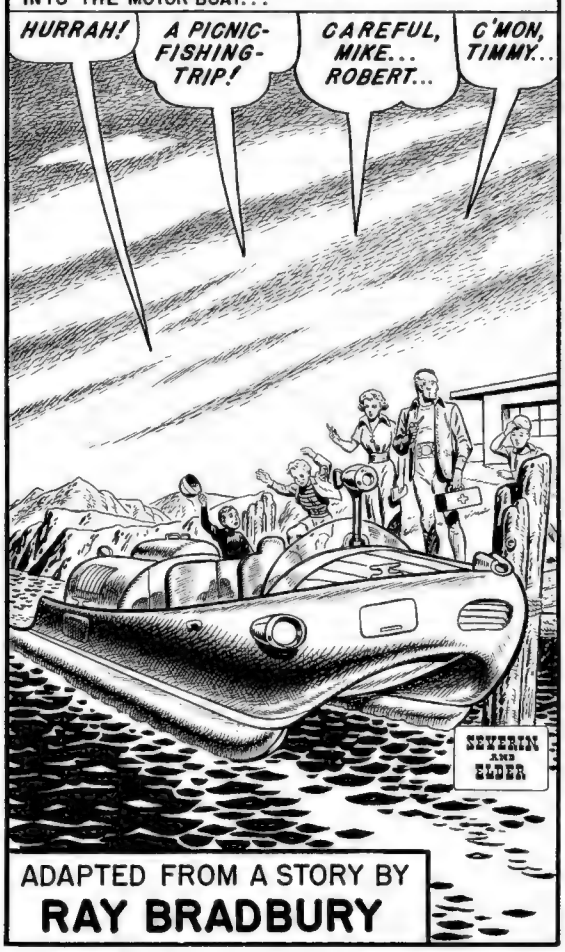
THEN, SMOKE...AND SILENCE!



DAWN SHOWED FAINTLY IN THE EAST. AMONG THE RUINS, ONE WALL STOOD ALONE. WITHIN THE WALL, A LAST VOICE SAID, OVER AND OVER, AGAIN AND AGAIN...

THE MILLION YEAR PICNIC

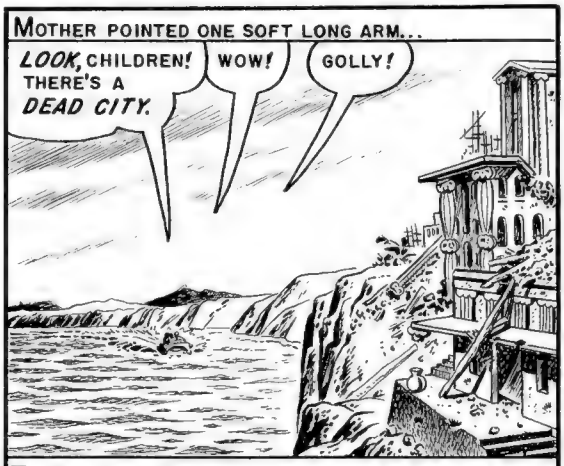
SOMEHOW THE IDEA WAS BROUGHT UP BY MOM THAT PERHAPS THE WHOLE FAMILY WOULD ENJOY A FISHING TRIP. BUT THEY WEREN'T MOM'S WORDS; TIMOTHY KNEW THAT. THEY WERE DAD'S WORDS, AND MOM USED THEM FOR HIM, SOMEHOW. IMMEDIATELY, THERE WAS A TUMULT AND A SHOUTING, AND QUICK AS JETS, THE CAMP WAS TUCKED INTO CAPSULES AND CONTAINERS. MOM SLIPPED INTO TRAVELING JUMPERS AND BLOUSE, DAD STUFFED HIS PIPE... HIS EYES ON THE MARTIAN SKY, AND THE THREE BOYS PILED... YELLING... INTO THE MOTOR BOAT...



ADAPTED FROM A STORY BY
RAY BRADBURY

DAD PUSHED A STUD. THE MOTOR BOAT SENT A HUMMING SOUND UP INTO THE SKY. THE WATER SHOOK BACK AND THE BOAT NOSED AHEAD. TIMOTHY SAT BESIDE DAD, HIS SMALL FINGERS ON TOP OF DAD'S HAIRY ONES. DAD HAD A FUNNY LOOK IN HIS EYES AS THE BOAT WENT UP-CANAL... A LOOK THAT TIMOTHY COULDN'T FIGURE...

MOTHER POINTED ONE SOFT LONG ARM...



THE DEAD CITY LAY DEAD FOR THEM AND THEM ALONE, DROWSING IN THE HOT SILENCE OF THE MARTIAN SUMMER. AND DAD LOOKED AS IF HE WAS PLEASED THAT IT WAS DEAD...

THE CITY WAS A FUTILE SPREAD OF PINK ROCKS SLEEPING ON A RISE OF SAND, STRETCHING LAZY CRUMBLED ARMS OUT THREE MILES, PETERING FINALLY INTO A DRIBBLE OF COLLAPSED PILLARS, A FEW TUMBLED WHARVES, ONE LONELY SHRINE WITH IMAGES STOLEN FROM IT, AND THEN THE SWEEP OF SAND AGAIN. NOTHING ELSE FOR MILES...

I DON'T SEE ANY *MARTIANS.*

THERE *AREN'T* ANY MARTIANS.

BUT THERE *ARE,* TIMMY...

JUST THEN, A ROCKET WENT UP... LIKE A STONE THROWN ACROSS A BLUE POND, HITTING WITH A SCAR OF FLAME, FALLING DEEP, DEEPER, AND VANISHING...

DAD! LOOK!

ISN'T THAT THE *EARTH* ROCKET, DADDY?

YES, SON...

DAD GOT A SCARED LOOK IN HIS EYES WHEN HE SAW THE ROCKET. HE GRITTED HIS TEETH, ADDING SPEED TO THE BOAT. THAT WAS THE *LAST* EARTH ROCKET...

DAD STARED AFTER THE DISAPPEARING SPECK. LOOKING UP AT THE SKY, YOU COULDN'T SEE A TRACE OF THE WAR... COULDN'T SEE MEN FIGHTING AND SLAUGHTERING EACH OTHER LIKE HUNG PIG CARCASSES, GUSHING HOT, SALT BLOOD...

WHAT ARE YOU *LOOKING* AT SO *HARD,* DAD?

I WAS LOOKING FOR *EARTHIAN LOGIC... COMMON SENSE... GOOD GOVERNMENT... PEACE... RESPONSIBILITY...*

HUH? ALL UP THERE?

NO. I DIDN'T *FIND* IT. IT'S NOT *THERE* ANY MORE. MAYBE IT'LL *NEVER* BE THERE *AGAIN.* MAYBE WE *FOOLED* OURSELVES THAT IT WAS *EVER* THERE...

SEE THE FISH!

MOTHER INTERRUPTED, POINTING. THERE ROSE A SOPRANO CLAMOR FROM ALL THREE BOYS AS THEY ROCKED THE BOAT, ARCHING THEIR TENDER NECKS TO SEE...

A SILVER RING-FISH FLOATED BY THEM, UNDULATING, AND CLOSING LIKE AN IRIS, INSTANTLY, AROUND FOOD PARTICLES TO ASSIMILATE THEM...

JUST LIKE WAR...

DAD LOOKED AT IT, HIS VOICE WAS DEEP AND QUIET...

WAR SWIMS ALONG, SEES FOOD, CONTRACTS. A MOMENT LATER...

EARTH IS GONE...

2

THEY SAT STILL AND FELT THE CANAL WATER RUSH COOL UNDER THEM, SWIFT AND GLASSY. ON BOTH SIDES OF THE CANAL THEY SAW THE GREAT OXYGEN VINES AND BUSHES SOWED BY FAR-SEEING EARTH SCIENTISTS FIFTY YEARS BEFORE AND ONLY NOW PROFUSE ENOUGH.. ACTIVE ENOUGH... TO GIVE MARS A THIN ATMOSPHERIC SHELL...

WHEN DO WE SEE THE MARTIANS, DADDY?

QUITE SOON, PERHAPS... MAYBE THIS AFTERNOON... MAYBE TONIGHT.

DON'T MISLEAD THE CHILD, WILLIAM. THE MARTIANS ARE A DEAD RACE. HOW CAN YOU...?

OH, NO, THEY'RE NOT. I'LL SHOW YOU SOME MARTIANS, ALL RIGHT.

TIMOTHY SCOWLED AT THAT, BUT SAID NOTHING. THERE WAS NO FATHOMING THE ALIEN THOUGHT PATTERNS OF GROWNUPS. BUT TEN-YEAR-OLD MICHAEL, WHO WAS DECORATED CONSPICUOUSLY WITH THE MEDALS OF MENDELIAN SKIN-COLORATION... FRECKLES... PURSUED THE SUBJECT...

WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE, DADDY? THE MARTIANS?

YOU'LL KNOW THEM WHEN YOU SEE THEM.

TIMOTHY WONDERED. THEY WERE GOING FAR ON THIS OUTING... TO FISH. BUT THERE WAS A GUN IN THE BOAT. AND THIS WAS A VACATION. BUT WHY ALL THE FOOD... MORE THAN ENOUGH TO LAST THEM YEARS AND YEARS? A VACATION. BUT JUST BEHIND THE VEIL OF THE VACATION WAS NOT A SOFT FACE OF LAUGHTER, BUT SOMETHING HARD AND BONY AND PERHAPS TERRIFYING. TIMOTHY COULD NOT LIFT THE VEIL AND THE OTHER TWO BOYS WERE BUSY BEING TEN YEARS OLD AND EIGHT YEARS OLD, RESPECTIVELY... ROBERT GLARING...

NO MARTIANS YET! NUTS!

DAD HAD BROUGHT AN ATOMIC RADIO ALONG. IT FUNCTIONED ON AN OLD PRINCIPLE: YOU HELD IT AGAINST THE BONES NEAR YOUR EAR, AND IT VIBRATED... SINGING OR TALKING TO YOU. DAD LISTENED TO IT NOW...

HIS FACE LOOKED LIKE ONE OF THOSE FALLEN MARTIAN CITIES, CAVED IN, SUCKED DRY, ALMOST DEAD. HE GAVE IT TO MOM TO LISTEN. HER LIPS DROPPED OPEN...

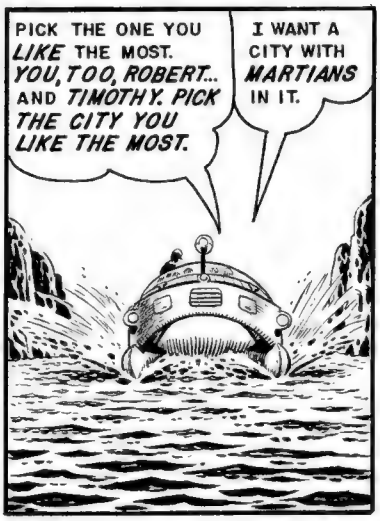
WHAT'S WRONG DAD? MOM?

TIMOTHY LOOKED AT THEM BOTH, QUESTIONINGLY. DAD BLINKED WET EYES...

IT'S ALL OVER. THE RADIO JUST WENT OFF THE ATOMIC BEAM. EVERY STATION ON EARTH IS GONE. THE AIR IS COMPLETELY SILENT. IT WILL PROBABLY REMAIN SILENT.

3

DAD JUST SAT THERE, AND THE KIDS WERE CAUGHT IN THE CENTER OF HIS AWE AND ACCEPTENCE. FINALLY, HE SAID...
MIKE! PICK A CITY. PICK ANY ONE OF THE CITIES WE PASS BY.
OKAY, DAD. BUT... WHICH ONE?



THEY PASSED SIX CITIES IN TWENTY MINUTES. MIKE LIKED THE FIRST, BUT THIS WAS VETOED BECAUSE EVERYONE DOUBTED QUICK, FIRST JUDGMENTS. THE SECOND CITY NOBODY LIKED. TIM LIKED THE THIRD. THE FOURTH AND FIFTH WERE TOO SMALL. THE SIXTH BROUGHT ACCLAIM FROM EVERYONE...

MOM NODDED SWIFTLY, HER FACE AN EXACT REPLICA OF DAD'S EXPRESSION...

STEERING THE BOAT TO A LANDING FLAT, DAD JUMPED OUT...
HERE WE ARE, KIDS! THIS IS OURS. THIS IS WHERE WE LIVE FROM NOW ON!
FROM NOW ON, DAD? BUT WHAT ABOUT THE EARTH ROCKET? WHAT ABOUT GOING HOME?

MICHAEL CONSIDERED THE LETHAL REVELATION AND BEGAN TO SOB LITTLE DRY SOBS, UNOILED AS YET BY TEARS...

WAIT A MINUTE, SON. I'M *GIVING* YOU A WHOLE LOT *MORE* IN *EXCHANGE!*

WHAT?

DAD WAVED HIS ARM TOWARD THE FIFTY OR SIXTY STRUCTURES STILL STANDING IN THE DEAD CITY THEY'D CHOSEN...

I'M *GIVING* YOU THIS *CITY*, MIKE. IT'S *YOURS.* FOR *YOU*... AND *ROBERT*... AND *TIMOTHY*... ALL *THREE* OF YOU...TO *OWN* FOR *YOURSELVES*...

OURS? ALL OURS? DID YOU *HEAR* THAT, GUYS? *ALL FOR US!* ALL OF *THAT!*

THEY HURRIED INTO THE GREAT PINK-STONED CITY, WHISPERING AMONG THEMSELVES, BECAUSE DEAD CITIES HAVE A WAY OF MAKING YOU WANT TO WHISPER...

RALPH EDWARDS WILL BE *COMING HERE TOO*... WITH HIS *WIFE*... AND *FOUR DAUGHTERS*...

FOUR DAUGHTERS!

GIRLS! GAHH!

THEY STOOD THERE, KING OF THE HILL, TOP OF THE HEAP, RULER OF ALL THEY SURVEYED, UNIMPEACHABLE MONARCHS AND PRESIDENTS...

IS THIS *REALLY* OURS, DAD?

THE *WHOLE PLANET* BELONGS TO *US*, KIDS. THE *WHOLE DARN PLANET*...

THEY STOOD THERE TRYING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IT *MEANT* TO OWN A WORLD, AND HOW *BIG* A WORLD REALLY *WAS*...

NIGHT CAME QUICKLY IN THE THIN ATMOSPHERE. DAD WENT DOWN TO THE BOAT AND CAME WALKING BACK CARRYING PILES OF PAPERS IN HIS BIG HANDS...

HE LAID THE PAPERS IN A CLUTTER IN AN OLD COURTYARD AND SET THEM AFIRE. TO KEEP WARM, THEY CROUCHED AROUND THEM AND LAUGHED AND TIMOTHY SAW THE LETTERS LEAP LIKE FRIGHTENED ANIMALS WHEN THE FLAMES TOUCHED AND ENGULFED THEM...

GOVERNMENT BONDS. POLITICAL MAPS. RELIGIOUS QUARRELS. SCIENCES. PREJUDICES. STOCKS. BONDS. WAR REPORTS. DAD SAT THERE AND FED THEM TO THE FIRE...

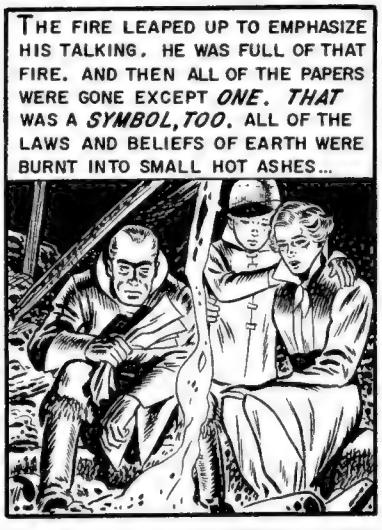
I'M *BURNING* A *WAY OF LIFE* JUST LIKE THE *WAY OF LIFE* IS BEING *BURNED CLEAN* BACK ON *EARTH* RIGHT NOW...

FORGIVE ME IF I TALK LIKE A POLITICIAN. I AM, AFTER ALL, A FORMER GOVERNOR OF A STATE. I WAS HONEST AND THEY HATED ME FOR IT. LIFE ON EARTH NEVER SEEMED TO ORIENT ITSELF. SCIENCE GOT TOO FAR AHEAD TOO QUICKLY, AND THE PEOPLE GOT LOST IN A SCIENTIFIC WILDERNESS... LIKE CHILDREN, MAKING OVER PRETTY THINGS... PUTTING EMPHASIS ON THE WRONG THINGS; ON MACHINES INSTEAD OF THE THOUGHT OF HOW TO RUN THE MACHINES.

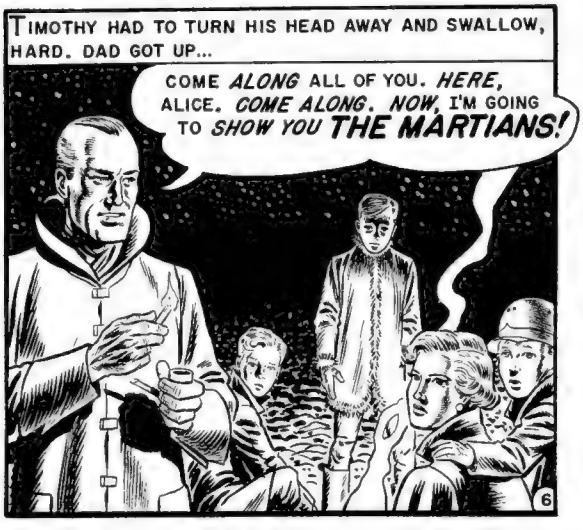
WARS GOT WORSE AND KILLED THEM. THAT'S WHAT THE SILENT RADIO MEANS. THAT'S WHAT WE RAN AWAY FROM. I KNEW THE WAR WAS COMING. I HOPED IT WOULDN'T BE THIS BAD. BUT NOW, EARTH IS GONE. INTERPLANETARY TRAVEL WON'T BE BACK FOR ANOTHER TWO HUNDRED YEARS... MAYBE LONGER... MAYBE NEVER.

THE WAY OF LIFE PROVED ITSELF WRONG, AND IT STRANGLED ITSELF WITH ITS OWN HANDS. YOU'RE YOUNG. I'LL TELL YOU THIS AGAIN... EVERY DAY... UNTIL IT SINKS IN.

DAD PAUSED TO FEED MORE PAPERS TO THE FIRE...
NOW WE ARE ALONE... WE AND A HANDFUL OF OTHERS WHO ARE TO MEET US IN A FEW DAYS. ENOUGH TO START OVER. ENOUGH TO BEGIN. ENOUGH TO TURN THEIR BACKS ON CHAOS AND STRIKE OUT ON A NEW LINE!


THE FIRE LEAPED UP TO EMPHASIZE HIS TALKING. HE WAS FULL OF THAT FIRE. AND THEN ALL OF THE PAPERS WERE GONE EXCEPT ONE. THAT WAS A SYMBOL, TOO. ALL OF THE LAWS AND BELIEFS OF EARTH WERE BURNT INTO SMALL HOT ASHES...

TIMOTHY LOOKED AT THE LAST THING DAD TOSSED INTO THE FIRE. IT WAS A MAP OF THE UNITED STATES...
IT WRINKLED AND DISTORTED ITSELF HOTLY AND WAS GONE LIKE A WARM BLACK BUTTERFLY...


TIMOTHY HAD TO TURN HIS HEAD AWAY AND SWALLOW, HARD. DAD GOT UP...
COME ALONG ALL OF YOU. HERE, ALICE. COME ALONG. NOW, I'M GOING TO SHOW YOU THE MARTIANS!
6

ROBERT WAS CRYING LOUDLY, AND DAD PICKED HIM UP AND CARRIED HIM, AND THEY WALKED DOWN THROUGH THE RUINS TO THE CANAL...

...THE CANAL, WHERE TOMORROW OR THE NEXT DAY THE BOYS' FUTURE WIVES WOULD COME UP IN A BOAT... SMALL LAUGHING GIRLS NOW, WITH THEIR FATHER AND MOTHER...

THE NIGHT CAME DOWN AROUND THEM AND THERE WERE STARS. BUT TIMOTHY COULDN'T FIND *EARTH*. IT HAD *ALREADY SET*...

THAT WAS SOMETHING TO *THINK* ABOUT. *IT HAD ALREADY SET!*

A COOL NIGHT WIND BLEW AROUND THEM... AND AS THEY WALKED, DAD SAID...

YOUR MOTHER AND I WILL TEACH YOU. PERHAPS WE'LL FAIL. I THINK NOT. WE'VE HAD EXPERIENCE. WE'VE SEEN. WE *PLANNED* THIS TRIP *YEARS* AGO, EVEN *BEFORE* YOU WERE *BORN*. EVEN IF THERE *HADN'T* BEEN A WAR, WE'D HAVE *COME* TO *MARS* TO *LIVE* AND FORM OUR *OWN* STANDARD OF LIVING. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ANOTHER *HUNDRED YEARS* BEFORE MARS WOULD HAVE BEEN *POISONED* BY EARTH CIVILIZATION. NOW, OF COURSE...

THEY REACHED THE CANAL. IT WAS LONG AND STRAIGHT AND COOL AND WET AND REFLECTIVE IN THE NIGHT...

I'VE ALWAYS *WANTED* TO SEE A *MARTIAN*, DAD. *WHERE ARE THEY? YOU PROMISED...*

THERE THEY ARE, MICHAEL...

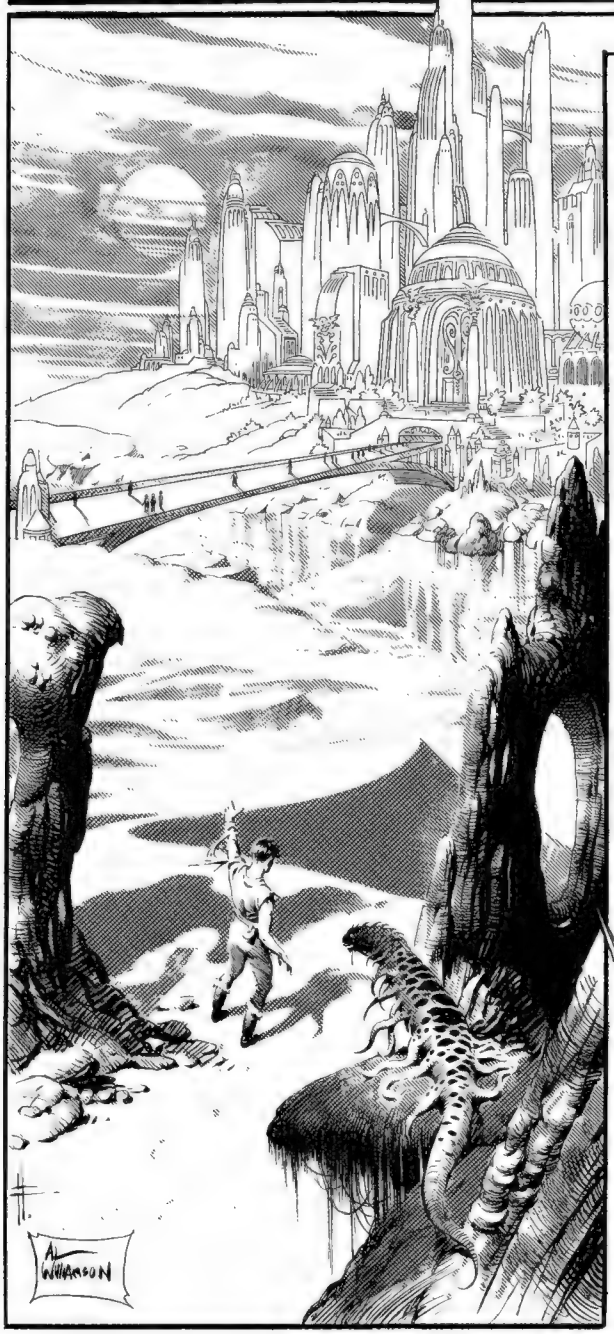
DAD POINTED *STRAIGHT DOWN*. THE MARTIANS WERE *THERE*, ALL RIGHT. IT SENT A *THRILL* CHASING THROUGH TIMOTHY...

THE MARTIANS WERE THERE... IN THE CANAL... REFLECTED IN THE WATER. TIMOTHY AND *MICHAEL* AND *ROBERT* AND *MOM* AND *DAD*. *THE MARTIANS* STARED *BACK* AT THEM FOR A LONG, LONG SILENT TIME FROM THE RIPPLING WATER...

MAD JOURNEY!

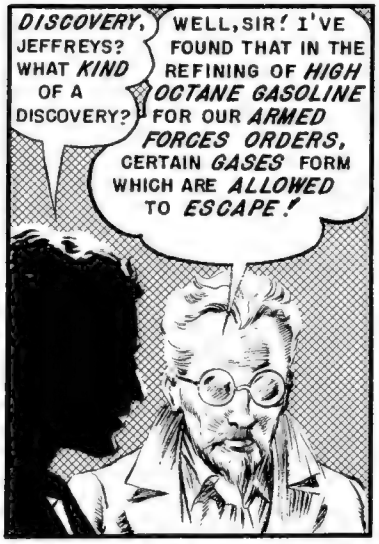
A MARTIAN CHRONICLES VARIATION

MAD JOURNEY!



MY NAME IS RODNEY SIMON! YES, I'M THE SAME RODNEY SIMON WHO BUILT AND HELPED MAN THE FIRST ROCKET-SHIP EVER TO REACH VENUS! YOU'RE WONDERING WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ME, AREN'T YOU? WELL, I'LL TELL YOU THE WHOLE STORY! BUT LET ME BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING! IT WAS BACK IN 1953! AT THAT TIME I WAS PRESIDENT OF CROWN OIL COMPANY...

WELL, WHAT'S UP, JEFFREYS? SOMETHING *WRONG* DOWN AT THE *LABS?*
NOTHING LIKE *THAT*, SIR! IT... IT'S... IT'S ABOUT A *DISCOVERY* I'VE MADE! I THINK IT *MIGHT* BE *IMPORTANT!*

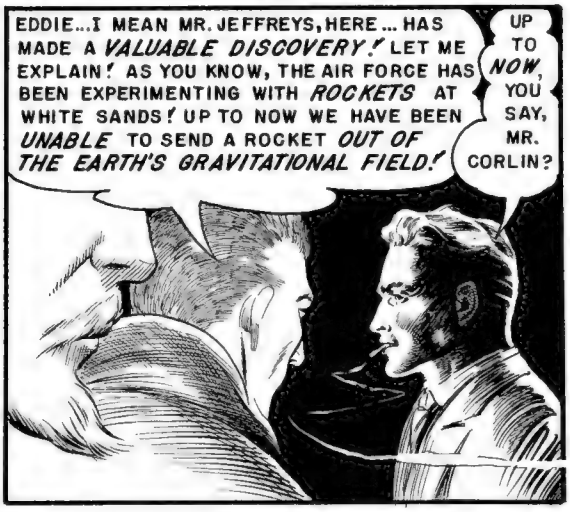

DISCOVERY, JEFFREYS? WHAT KIND OF A DISCOVERY?
WELL, SIR! I'VE FOUND THAT IN THE REFINING OF HIGH OCTANE GASOLINE FOR OUR ARMED FORCES ORDERS, CERTAIN GASES FORM WHICH ARE ALLOWED TO ESCAPE!

I'M AWARE OF THAT, JEFFREYS!
WELL, SIR! I'VE CAPTURED SAMPLES OF THESE ESCAPING GASES! ONE OF THEM IS NEW! ITS MOLECULAR STRUCTURE IS UNKNOWN! I'VE SUCCEEDED IN LIQUIFYING THIS NEW GAS!

NATURALLY IT EXPLODED!
YES, SIR! BUT WITH GREAT FORCE! I MADE FURTHER TESTS TO MEASURE THIS FORCE! I HAVE A FRIEND OUTSIDE WHO CAN EXPLAIN MUCH BETTER THAN I THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESULTS! MAY I BRING HIM IN?

JEFFREYS WENT OUT AND BROUGHT IN A TALL, LEAN, DARK-HAIRED MAN...

MR. SIMON! THIS IS ALAN CORLIN! HE IS A SCIENTIST ASSIGNED TO THE U.S.A.F. ROCKET EXPERIMENTAL STATION AT WHITE SANDS!
MR. CORLIN! A PLEASURE!
MR. SIMON! I'M HONORED. I THINK YOU'LL BE VERY PLEASED WITH WHAT I HAVE TO TELL YOU!


EDDIE... I MEAN MR. JEFFREYS, HERE... HAS MADE A VALUABLE DISCOVERY! LET ME EXPLAIN! AS YOU KNOW, THE AIR FORCE HAS BEEN EXPERIMENTING WITH ROCKETS AT WHITE SANDS! UP TO NOW WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO SEND A ROCKET OUT OF THE EARTH'S GRAVITATIONAL FIELD!
UP TO NOW, YOU SAY, MR. CORLIN?

YES! YOU SEE, UP TO NOW, THE BEST FUEL AVAILABLE WAS CAPABLE OF SUPPLYING A ROCKET WITH AN EXHAUST VELOCITY OF A LITTLE OVER TWO MILES PER SECOND! SINCE A ROCKET MUST ATTAIN A VELOCITY OF SEVEN MILES PER SECOND IN ORDER TO ESCAPE FROM THE EARTH'S GRAVITATIONAL FIELD, THIS PRESENTED QUITE A DRAWBACK!
I CAN UNDERSTAND!
2

USING A FUEL WITH AN EXHAUST VELOCITY OF TWO MILES PER SECOND, IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO BURN FOUR HUNDRED AND ONE POUNDS OF THIS FUEL FOR EVERY POUND OF LOAD IN ORDER TO ATTAIN THIS ESCAPE VELOCITY OF SEVEN MILES PER SECOND! NO ROCKET COULD BE CONSTRUCTED TO CONTAIN FOUR HUNDRED AND ONE TIMES ITS OWN WEIGHT IN FUEL!
YOU MEAN A ONE TON ROCKET WOULD HAVE TO CARRY FOUR HUNDRED AND ONE TONS OF FUEL?
...TO ATTAIN ESCAPE VELOCITY AND LEAVE THE EARTH'S GRAVITATIONAL PULL, YES! THAT'S WHY THE V-2 FIZZLES OUT ABOUT EIGHTY MILES UP! THAT'S AS HIGH AS THE FUEL IT CARRIES CAN PUSH IT! NOW JEFFREY'S DISCOVERY...
MY FUEL HAS AN EXHAUST VELOCITY OF SEVEN MILES A SECOND!
WHAT?
HEH, HEH! I SEE YOU ARE FAST WITH FIGURES MR. SIMON!
I'M FAST ENOUGH TO CALCULATE THAT ACCORDING TO YOUR PREVIOUS STATEMENTS, MR. CORLIN, USING JEFFREY'S FUEL, YOU NEED ONLY BURN ABOUT TWO POUNDS OF FUEL FOR EVERY POUND OF LOAD IN ORDER TO REACH ESCAPE VELOCITY!
ONE POINT SEVEN, TO BE EXACT, MR. SIMON! YOU CAN SEE THAT SUCH A ROCKET COULD EASILY BE BUILT!
ONE THAT COULD CARRY TWO TONS OF FUEL FOR EVERY THREE TONS OF GROSS WEIGHT? I'M SURE OF IT!
IN FACT, MR. SIMON, I HAVE HERE BLUEPRINTS FOR A ROCKET SHIP CAPABLE OF CARRYING SEVEN TIMES ITS OWN WEIGHT IN FUEL!
SUCH A SHIP COULD REACH THE MOON, MR. SIMON!
UP TO NOW, SPACE TRAVEL HAS BEEN IMPOSSIBLE BECAUSE LOW EXHAUST-VELOCITY FUELS PROHIBITED IT! ED'S... MR. JEFFREY'S... NEW FUEL HAS OPENED THE DOOR FOR US!
I... I'M SPEECHLESS! A TRIP TO THE MOON IS NOW ACTUALLY POSSIBLE!
EXACTLY! AND YOU HAVE THE MONEY TO BUILD THE SHIP! THINK OF IT! THE FAME! THE FIRST SHIP TO REACH THE MOON! AND WITH CROWN OIL'S OWN FUEL!
BUT... WHAT ABOUT THE AIR FORCE?
THEY CAN WAIT TILL WE GET BACK! MEANTIME, WE CAN KEEP THE FUEL FORMULA A SECRET!
3

I MUST ADMIT THAT IT DIDN'T TAKE JEFFREYS AND CORLIN LONG TO CONVINCE ME! WITHIN A MONTH, CONSTRUCTION ON CROWN OIL COMPANY'S ROCKET-SHIP WAS BEGUN! AT A STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING...

YOU'RE CRAZY, ROD! I THINK THIS ROCKET-SHIP BUSINESS IS SHEER MADNESS!

LOOK HERE, AXEL! I'M SO SURE OF THIS THING, I'M GOING ALONG MYSELF!

SINCE I CONTROLLED SIXTY-NINE PERCENT OF CROWN OIL'S VOTING STOCK, THE REST OF THE STOCKHOLDERS WERE HELPLESS! THEY COULDN'T STOP ME! THE MORE THEY FOUGHT, THE MORE I WAS DETERMINED...

I TELL YOU, MR. SIMON IS OUT OF HIS MIND! I DEMAND HE BE EXAMINED TO SEE IF HE IS SANE!

ALL RIGHT! I'LL PERMIT A COMPETENT PSYCHOLOGIST TO TEST MY SANITY, MR. BUDDINS!

YES, I EVEN UNDERWENT A SANITY TEST! THE RESULTS WERE AS I EXPECTED...

GENTLEMEN! I FIND THAT MR. SIMON IS PERFECTLY SANE!

OKAY, ROD! YOU WIN! BUT I STILL THINK YOU'RE NUTS!

AND THEN, ABOUT A MONTH BEFORE THE CROWN-MOON-ROCKET WAS COMPLETED, IT HAPPENED! THE RADIOS BLARED THE NEWS...

STRANGE SIGNALS HAVE BEEN PICKED UP BY OUR RADAR MONITOR STATIONS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD! EXPERTS SAY THAT THESE SIGNALS ARE EMANATING FROM THE PLANET VENUS!

DID YOU HEAR THAT, CORLIN?

I HEARD, MR. SIMON!

A WILD IDEA STRUCK ME...

CORLIN! COULD OUR SHIP REACH VENUS?

I...I THINK SO, ROD! I'D HAVE TO CHECK!

CORLIN CHECKED! THEN HE REPORTED...

THE ESCAPE VELOCITY FROM EARTH IS SEVEN MILES PER SECOND! THE ESCAPE VELOCITY OF THE MOON IS TWO M.P.S... BUT THE MOON HAS NO ATMOSPHERE, HENCE FUEL WOULD BE USED IN BRAKING THE SHIP EQUAL TO THE MOON'S ESCAPE VELOCITY! THAT MAKES IT FOUR M.P.S. FOR A GRAND TOTAL OF ELEVEN M.P.S. ESCAPE VELOCITIES WE'D HAVE TO OVERCOME!

AND IF WE SUBSTITUTED VENUS FOR THE MOON?

VENUS HAS AN ESCAPE VELOCITY OF SIX POINT THREE M.P.S.! BUT VENUS HAS AN ATMOSPHERE! WE NEEDN'T WASTE FUEL IN LANDING! WE COULD CIRCLE THROUGH ITS ATMOSPHERE SEVERAL TIMES TILL WE'D SLOWED DOWN ENOUGH TO GLIDE IN!

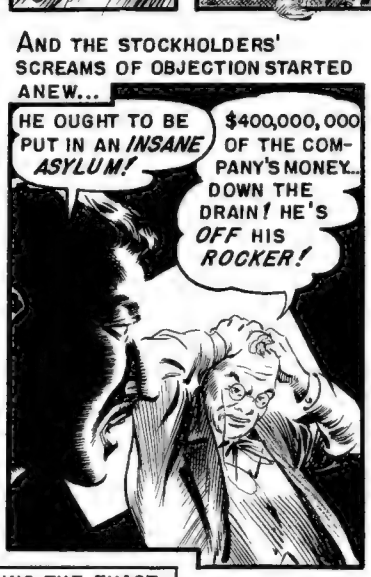
THEN DO WE HAVE ENOUGH FUEL TO MAKE UP THE TWO POINT THREE MILES ESCAPE VELOCITY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VENUS AND THE MOON?

4

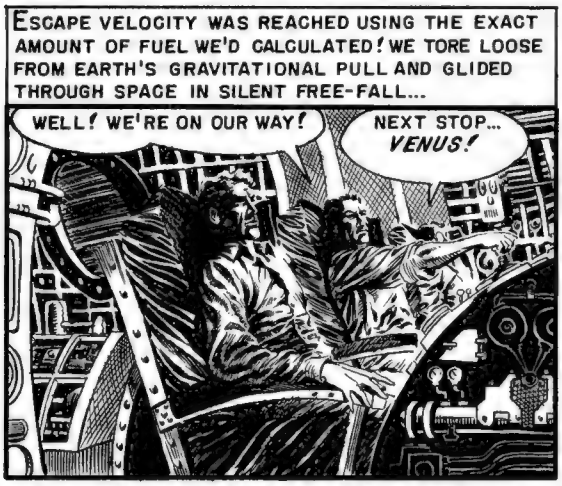
HMM! LET'S SEE! WE'D NEED *ENOUGH* FUEL TO OVERCOME *THIRTEEN POINT THREE MILES PER SECOND ESCAPE VELOCITIES!* THAT WOULD MEAN A *MASS RATIO* OF ALMOST *EIGHT TO ONE!* SEVEN POUNDS OF *FUEL* FOR *EACH* POUND OF SHIP...
THEN WE *CAN* DO IT! OUR SHIP CARRIES *EXACTLY SEVEN TIMES ITS OWN WEIGHT IN FUEL!*

YES! BUT THAT WOULD BE *SHAVING IT CLOSE!*
CORLIN! *WE'RE* GOING TO *VENUS!* IF THERE'S *LIFE* THERE... AND THERE *MAY* BE, ACCORDING TO THESE *SIGNALS* WE'VE BEEN RECEIVING... THINK OF THE *RECEPTION* WE'LL GET!

NATURALLY THE NEWSPAPERS MADE A BIG PLAY OUT OF OUR CHANGE IN PLANS...
EXTRA! MAD INDUSTRIALIST WILL TRY FOR VENUS! MOON DISCARDED! WILL CHECK ON SIGNALS; SAYS R. SIMON, OIL MAGNATE! EXTRA!

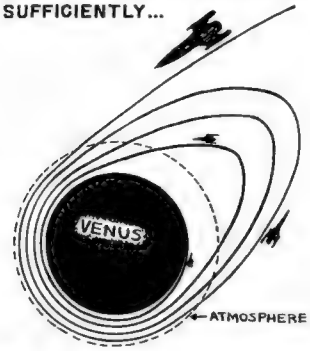

AND THE STOCKHOLDERS' SCREAMS OF OBJECTION STARTED ANEW...
HE OUGHT TO BE PUT IN AN *INSANE ASYLUM!*
$400,000,000 OF THE COMPANY'S MONEY... DOWN THE DRAIN! HE'S *OFF* HIS *ROCKER!*

BUT WE WENT ANYWAY! ON JUNE 3, 1954, THE CROWN-VENUS-ROCKET TOOK OFF FROM EARTH...


ESCAPE VELOCITY WAS REACHED USING THE EXACT AMOUNT OF FUEL WE'D CALCULATED! WE TORE LOOSE FROM EARTH'S GRAVITATIONAL PULL AND GLIDED THROUGH SPACE IN SILENT FREE-FALL...
WELL! WE'RE ON OUR WAY!
NEXT STOP... *VENUS!*

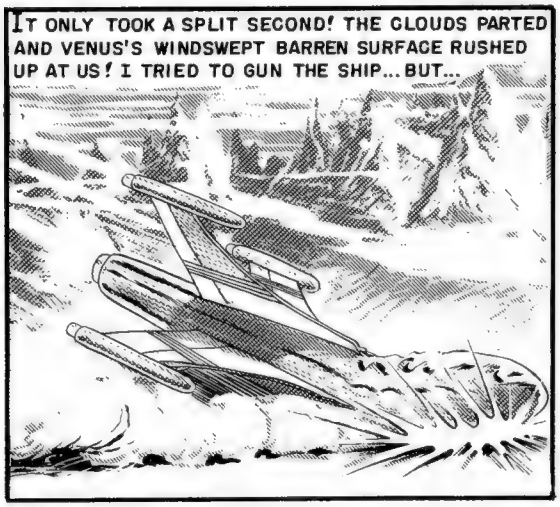
I WON'T BORE YOU WITH THE DETAILS OF THE UNEVENTFUL FALL THROUGH SPACE TOWARD THE CLOUD-COVERED PLANET! LET ME JUST WARN YOU! IF YOU EVER MAKE THE TRIP, *BRING PLENTY TO READ!*
FINALLY...
THERE SHE IS!
WE'RE ENTERING HER *GRAVITATIONAL FIELD!* START THE *ELLIPTICAL APPROACH PATTERN!*
5

THE ELLIPTICAL APPROACH PATTERN LOOKS LIKE THIS! THIS IS A ROUGH DIAGRAM, BUT SERVES TO ILLUSTRATE THE METHOD WE USED IN CUTTING OUR SPEED! BY THE TIME WE HIT THE CLOUD LAYER, VENUS'S UPPER ATMOSPHERE HAD SLOWED US SUFFICIENTLY...

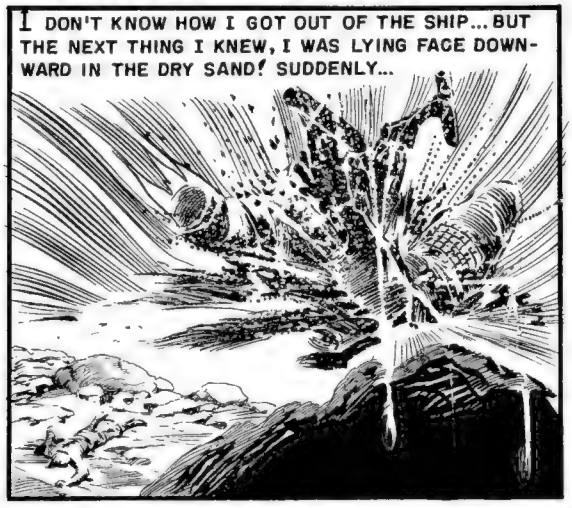


I CAN'T SEE! THE SCREEN IS BLANK! THE CLOUD LAYER IS TOO DENSE!
GOOD LORD! WHAT IF THIS CLOUD LAYER EXTENDS DIRECTLY TO THE SURFACE!

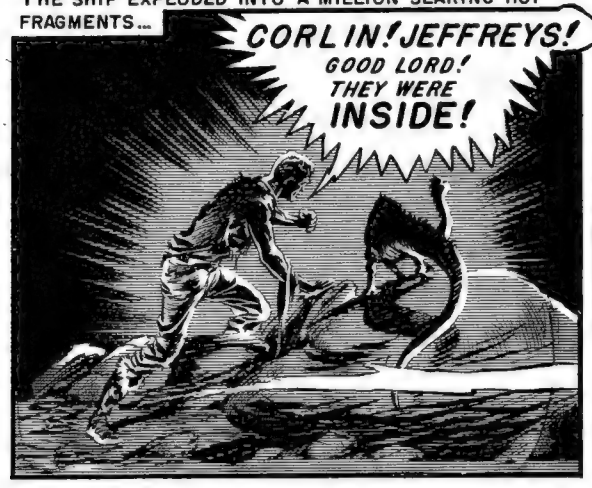
IT ONLY TOOK A SPLIT SECOND! THE CLOUDS PARTED AND VENUS'S WINDSWEPT BARREN SURFACE RUSHED UP AT US! I TRIED TO GUN THE SHIP... BUT...



I DON'T KNOW HOW I GOT OUT OF THE SHIP... BUT THE NEXT THING I KNEW, I WAS LYING FACE DOWNWARD IN THE DRY SAND! SUDDENLY...



THE SHIP EXPLODED INTO A MILLION SEARING HOT FRAGMENTS...



I LOOKED AROUND! VENUS'S PARCHED AND BURNING WASTES STRETCHED OUT BEFORE ME AS FAR AS I COULD SEE! I STARTED RUNNING... SCREAMING...

I WAS TOO SHOCKED TO REALIZE HOW *LUCKY* I WAS! VENUS'S ATMOSPHERE WAS *BREATHABLE!* WE'D BROUGHT ALONG SPACE-SUITS... BUT I WASN'T THINKING ABOUT THAT NOW! I WAS FRIGHTENED... MAROONED ON THIS STRANGE BARREN PLANET! AND THEN I SAW IT ON THE HORIZON! A *CITY*...

A CIVILIZATION! THANK GOD! I'M SAVED!

I STUMBLED INTO THE CITY! THE BUILDINGS WERE WEIRD, BUT THE CREATURES MOVING ABOUT IN THE STREETS WERE HUMANOID! YES! *HUMANOID!* THEY LOOKED *JUST LIKE HUMAN BEINGS*...

SOMEBODY! HELP ME! I'VE JUST COME IN A *SPACE-SHIP!* I'M FROM *EARTH... UP THERE...*

A FEW VENUSIANS GATHERED AROUND ME! THEY SEEMED UNIMPRESSED WITH WHAT I WAS SAYING...

LISTEN TO ME! I'M FROM *EARTH...* THE *THIRD PLANET!*

I'M AN EARTHMAN!

FINALLY ONE OF THEM TOOK ME BY THE ARM AND LED ME TO AN OFFICIAL-LOOKING STRUCTURE...

WELL! THIS IS MORE *LIKE* IT!

THE CREATURE GUIDED ME DOWN A LONG CORRIDOR TO AN IMPRESSIVE DOOR! AS I ENTERED...

HEY! WHAT THE...!

THERE ARE OTHER VENUSIANS IN THIS ROOM WITH ME! TWICE A DAY, FOOD IS DELIVERED TO US THROUGH THAT DOOR! I'VE BEEN HERE TWO YEARS NOW! I'VE EVEN LEARNED THEIR LANGUAGE! WANT TO KNOW WHAT THEY'RE SAYING...?

I'M FROM *EARTH...* THE *THIRD PLANET!*

I'M FROM *EARTH...* UP *THERE!*

I'M FROM *EARTH!*

BABBLE... BABBLE...

YES! *THIS* IS A *VENUSIAN INSANE ASYLUM!* AND *THIS* IS THE ROOM THAT HOUSES *DERANGED VENUSIANS* WHO *INSIST* THEY'RE FROM *EARTH!*

THE END 7

STORIES FROM
THE ILLUSTRATED MAN

home to stay!

Wood.

PROLOGUE: THE CHILD'S NAME IS JIMMY...JIMMY FAWCETT! HE STANDS BESIDE HIS MOTHER, ELAINE FAWCETT, IN THE GARDEN OF THEIR TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY SOLAR HOME! ABOVE THEM, THE NIGHT SKY HANGS LIKE A GIGANTIC BLACK UMBRELLA, FLECKED WITH COUNTLESS STAR HOLES! THE MOTHER'S FACE IS ANXIOUS AS SHE GAZES UP AT THE TWINKLING DIAMOND SUNS! THE BOY'S EYES SHINE IN CHILDLIKE ADORATION...

THEY STAND IN SILENT AWE, SURVEYING THE CELESTIAL MAGIC ABOVE THEM! SUDDENLY, THE BOY GASPS! HE LIFTS A CHUBBY HAND AND POINTS! ACROSS THE WHITE-DOTTED BLACK, A METEOR PLUMMETS EARTHWARD... ITS FLAMING TRAIL A FAINT LINE OF LIGHT STRETCHING OUT BEHIND IT...

THE BOY'S FACE BRIGHTENS! HE SMILES AS HE WATCHES THE SHOOTING STAR STREAK ACROSS THE NIGHT SKY! A CHILDISH GIGGLE ESCAPES FROM HIS TINY LIPS! HE SIGHS...

STORY: DAN FAWCETT HAD BEEN A ROCKET PILOT EVEN BEFORE HIS LITTLE SON HAD BEEN BORN! IN FACT, ONE OF THE REASONS HE AND ELAINE HAD HAD JIMMY WAS TO FILL HER LONELY HOURS WHEN HE WAS AWAY... OUT THERE...

I'VE *GOT* TO, BABY! 'INTERPLANETARY' WANTS THE SHIPMENT TO REACH MARS BY *CHRISTMAS*! I'VE PUT IT OFF AS LONG AS I COULD!
MARS! BUT THAT MEANS *TWO WHOLE YEARS*! WHY...JIMMY WON'T EVEN *KNOW* YOU WHEN YOU GET BACK!

...A BOY WHOSE FATHER GOES AWAY FOR *TWO* OR *THREE* YEARS AT A TIME PRACTICALLY HAS *NO FATHER AT ALL!*
I'LL...I'LL THINK ABOUT IT, ELAINE! WELL...I'VE GOT TO BE GOING NOW...

JIMMY WAS ALMOST THREE WHEN HIS DADDY CAME BACK! ELAINE HAD BEEN RIGHT! HE DIDN'T *KNOW* HIS FATHER! THE FIRST TIME JIMMY SAW HIS DADDY, HE BEGAN TO CRY...

THERE, THERE, SON! DON'T BE AFRAID OF *ME*! I'M YOUR *OLD MAN*...YOUR *POP*! *LOOK*! I *BROUGHT* YOU SOMETHING!
DON'T BE DISAPPOINTED DAN! HE... HE'LL HAVE TO GET *USED* TO YOU!

SURE, ELAINE! I UNDERSTAND! I'M A PERFECT *STRANGER* TO HIM! I CAN'T *BLAME* HIM FOR...FOR...*HEY*, FELLER! *LOOK*! *FOR YOU*!
LOOK WHAT DADDY BROUGHT YOU, JIMMY! A...SOB...A *ROCKET SHIP*! SOB! JUST LIKE THE ONE HE...SOB...SOB.
2

IT TOOK A FEW WEEKS FOR LITTLE TODDLING JIMMY TO WARM UP TO DAN! BUT AFTER A WHILE, HE WAS CLAMBERING ALL OVER HIS FATHER AS IF DAN HAD NEVER BEEN AWAY...

YEAH, ELAINE! I KNOW! YOU'RE RIGHT! I'LL... I'LL GO DOWN TO 'INTERPLANETARY' ONE OF THESE DAYS AND TELL THEM I'M RESIGNING!
OH, DAN! PROMISE?
LOOKA, DADDY! WOCKET SHIP... VOOOOM!

BUT DAN NEVER DID RESIGN FROM 'INTERPLANETARY'! HE JUST COULDN'T! AND AS THE WEEKS AND MONTHS DRAGGED BY, DAN BECAME MORE AND MORE RESTLESS! AT NIGHT, HE WOULD GO OUT INTO THE GARDEN AND LOOK UP AT THE STAR-STUDDED SKY...

ELAINE WOULD STAND BESIDE HIM QUIETLY... WAITING...

THERE... THERE'S NOTHING TO TALK ABOUT, DARLING! I KNOW WHAT'S BOTHERING YOU! JIMMY... JIMMY AND I WILL BE HERE WHEN YOU... SOB... GET BACK!
I CAN'T HELP IT, ELAINE! I JUST CAN'T! IT'S IN MY BLOOD!

SO ONCE AGAIN, THE SPACEMAN LEFT HIS WIFE AND CHILD TO ANSWER THE BECKONING CALL OF OTHER WORLDS! JIMMY WAS ALMOST SIX WHEN HIS PILOT-FATHER RETURNED...

AND I'VE MISSED BOTH OF YOU, HONEY! MISSED YOU TERRIBLY!
I TOLD THE OTHER KIDS 'BOUT YOU, DADDY! THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE ME! THEY SAID I HAD NO DADDY!
WELL, NOW YOU CAN... SHOW THEM ALL... SOB... CAN'T YOU, JIMMY?
3

JIMMY WAS PROUD OF DAN! ANY CHILD WOULD BE! JIMMY'S LITTLE FRIENDS LISTENED IN AMAZEMENT TO HIS FATHER'S EXCITING ADVENTURES...

BUT AT NIGHT, WHEN JIMMY WAS ASLEEP, AND ALL WAS STILL SAVE FOR THE WHOOSH OF AN OCCASIONAL JET TRANSPORT OVERHEAD, DAN AND ELAINE WOULD TALK...

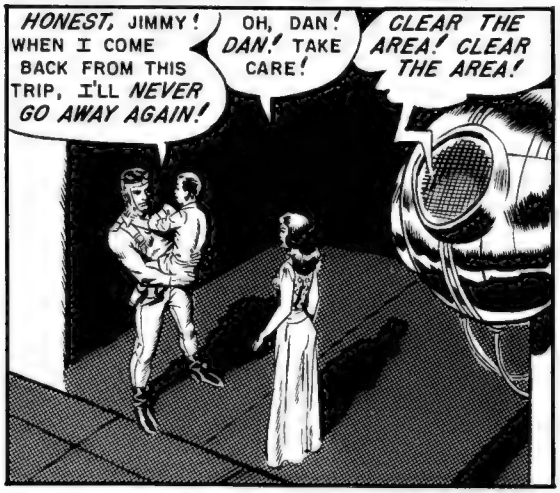
THE BOY *IDOLIZES* YOU, DAN! BUT *KISSING* YOUR *PICTURE* EVERY NIGHT WHILE YOU'RE OUT THERE *ISN'T ENOUGH!* HE *NEEDS* YOU *WITH* HIM... *EVERY DAY...*
I *KNOW*, ELAINE! I'VE *GOT* TO QUIT THIS TIME! THE YEARS ARE SLIPPING BY SO *FAST!* LAST TIME I WAS HOME, HE COULD HARDLY *TALK! NOW...*

BUT BY THE TIME TWO MONTHS HAD PASSED, DAN WAS OUT THERE AGAIN ...IN THE GARDEN... LOOKING UP AT THE DISTANT BLAZING WORLDS...

THEY CAME DOWN TO THE ROCKET PORT TO SEE DAN OFF! JIMMY STARED IN WONDERMENT AT THE GLEAMING ROCKET SHIP TOWERING OVER THEM...

THE LOUDSPEAKER OVERHEAD CRACKLED...LAUNCHING TIME WAS NEAR! DAN LOOKED AT ELAINE...

DAN PICKED UP HIS SMILING BOY IN HIS STRONG ARMS! THE SPACE PILOT'S EYES FILLED WITH TEARS...

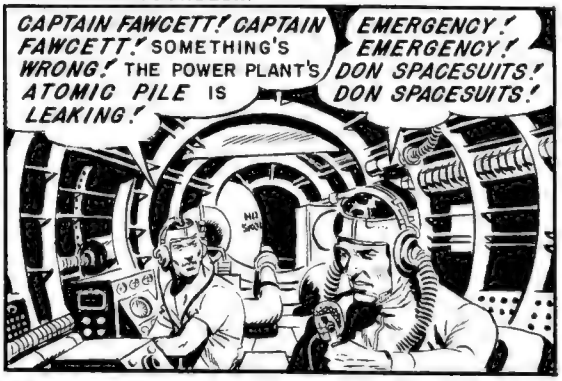


JIMMY AND HIS MOTHER WATCHED DAN STRIDE ACROSS THE LAUNCHING SITE AND DISAPPEAR INTO THE SHIP! THEY HELD THEIR EARS AS THE DEAFENING ROAR OF THE EXPLODING ROCKET FUEL LIFTED THE SHIP SKYWARD...

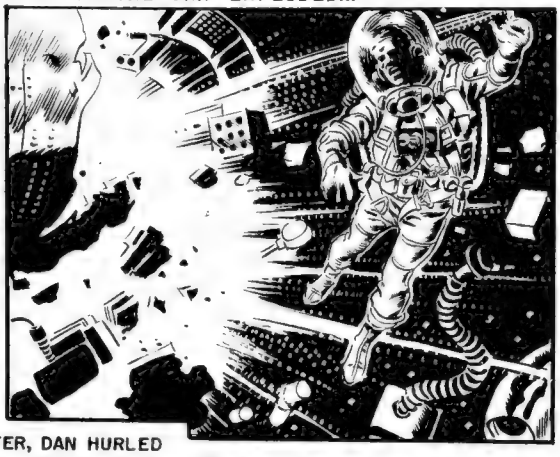
THEY WATCHED AS THE SILVER GIANT ROSE HIGHER AND HIGHER...ITS TRAIL OF ROCKET EXHAUST DISAPPEARING INTO THE GATHERING TWILIGHT...

A YEAR PASSED! THEN TWO! THE BOY WAS EIGHT NOW...ALMOST NINE! HE WOULD GO OUT INTO THE GARDEN EACH NIGHT TO GAZE UP AT THE TWINKLING FARAWAY STARS! HIS MOTHER WOULD STAND BESIDE HIM...HER FACE ANXIOUS...

THOUSANDS OF MILES ABOVE THE EARTH, IN THE BLACK VOID OF SPACE, A ROCKET SHIP HURTLED HOMEWARD... *DAN FAWCETT'S* ROCKET SHIP! AND AS IT APPROACHED EARTH'S GRAVITATIONAL FIELD, AN ALARM SOUNDED...


CAPTAIN FAWCETT! CAPTAIN FAWCETT! SOMETHING'S WRONG! THE POWER PLANT'S ATOMIC PILE IS LEAKING!
EMERGENCY! EMERGENCY! DON SPACESUITS! DON SPACESUITS!

THE MEN OF THE ROCKET SHIP SCRAMBLED FOR THEIR PRESSURIZED SUITS! DAN GOT INTO HIS, JUST AS THE SHIP EXPLODED...



WHEN DAN CAME TO, HE FOUND HIMSELF STREAKING THROUGH SPACE... HIS SUIT INTACT! BEFORE HIM, THE HUGE GREEN SPHERE LOOMED LARGER AND LARGER...

FASTER AND FASTER, DAN HURLED EARTHWARD, DRAGGED BY THE EVER-INCREASING PULL OF ITS GRAVITATION...

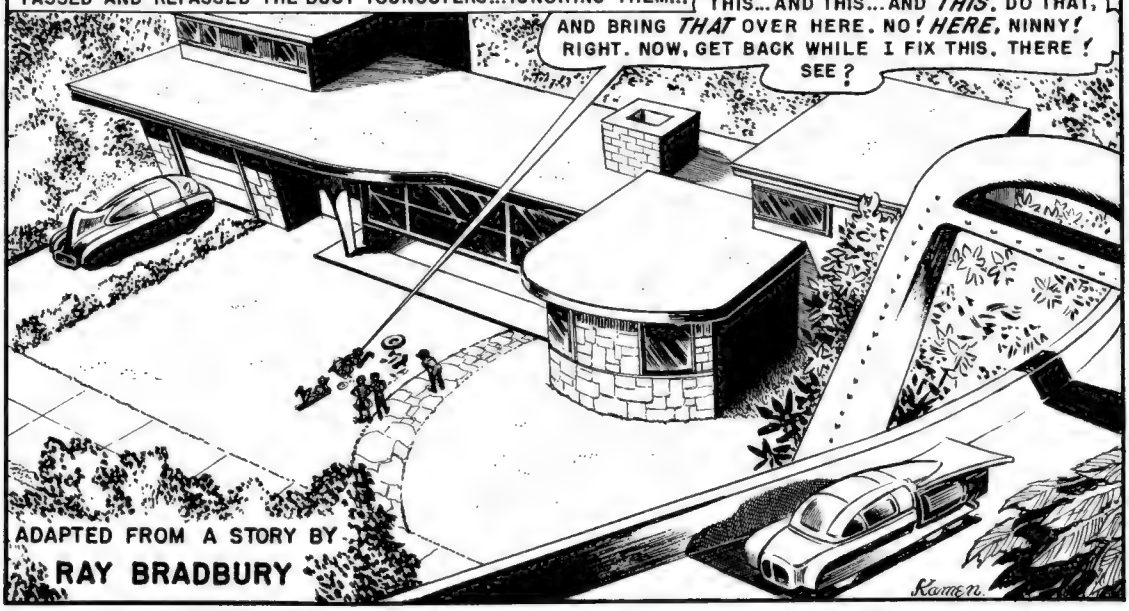
THE HEAT INCREASED! THE PLASTO SPACESUIT BEGAN TO SIZZLE... ITS OUTER LAYERS BURNING AWAY..

EPILOGUE: WHEN A FALLING OBJECT FROM OUTER SPACE ENTERS THE EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE, IT BEGINS TO *BURN* FROM THE FRICTION CAUSED BY ITS PASSING THROUGH THE AIR AT SUCH GREAT SPEED! TO A LITTLE BOY AND HIS MOTHER, FAR BELOW THIS INCANDESCENT BODY, IT WOULD APPEAR AS...

THE BOY'S FACE BRIGHTENS! HE SMILES AS HE WATCHES THE SHOOTING STAR STREAK ACROSS THE NIGHT SKY AND FADE AWAY AS IT BURNS OUT! A CHILDISH GIGGLE ESCAPES FROM HIS TINY LIPS...

ZERO HOUR

IT WAS AN INTERESTING FACT THAT THE FURY AND BUSTLE OCCURRED ONLY AMONG THE YOUNGER CHILDREN. THE OLDER ONES, THOSE TEN YEARS AND MORE, DISDAINED THE AFFAIR AND MARCHED SCORNFULLY OFF ON HIKES, OR PLAYED A MORE DIGNIFIED GAME OF HIDE AND SEEK ON THEIR OWN. MEANWHILE, PARENTS CAME AND WENT IN CHROMIUM BEETLE CARS. REPAIRMEN CAME TO REPAIR VACUUM ELEVATORS IN HOUSES, TO FIX FLUTTERING TELEVISION SETS, OR HAMMER UPON STUBBORN FOOD-DELIVERY TUBES. THE ADULT CIVILIZATION PASSED AND REPASSED THE BUSY YOUNGSTERS... IGNORING THEM...


THIS... AND THIS... AND THIS. DO THAT, AND BRING THAT OVER HERE. NO! HERE, NINNY! RIGHT. NOW, GET BACK WHILE I FIX THIS. THERE! SEE?
ADAPTED FROM A STORY BY
RAY BRADBURY
Kamen

THE CHILDREN CATAPULTED ACROSS GREEN LAWNS, SHOUTING AT EACH OTHER. MINK RAN INTO HER HOUSE, ALL DIRT AND SWEAT...

FOR HER SEVEN YEARS, MINK WAS LOUD AND STRONG AND DEFINITE! HER MOTHER, MRS. MORRIS, WATCHED HER AS SHE YANKED OUT DRAWERS AND RATTLED PANS AND TOOLS INTO A LARGE SACK...

IN ALMOST EVERY YARD ON THE STREET, CHILDREN BROUGHT OUT KNIVES AND FORKS AND POKERS AND OLD STOVEPIPES AND CAN OPENERS...
I WANNA PLAY.
GO AWAY. YOU'D JUST MAKE FUN OF US.

TWELVE-YEAR-OLD JOSEPH CONNERS SURVEYED THE YOUNGER CHILDREN WITH RELUCTANCE AND A CERTAIN WISTFULNESS...
HONEST, I WOULDN'T MAKE FUN. LET ME PLAY...
YOU'RE TOO OLD. YOU'D ONLY LAUGH AND SPOIL THE INVASION.

JOSEPH WALKED OFF SLOWLY. HE KEPT LOOKING BACK, ALL DOWN THE BLOCK. MINK TALKED EARNESTLY TO SOMEONE NEAR THE ROSE BUSH... THOUGH THERE WAS NO ONE THERE. ANNA TOOK NOTES ON A PAD...
TRIANGLE!
HUH? HOW DO YOU SPELL IT?

MINK'S MOTHER, FROM HER UPSTAIRS WINDOW, GAZED DOWN...
T-R-I... OH, SPELL IT YOURSELF! NOW... BEAM!
I STILL HAVEN'T GOT TRI... ANGLE DOWN YET!
A-N-G-L-E, ANNA!

OH, THANKS, MRS. MORRIS!
THAT'S ALL RIGHT, ANNA!
NOW... BEAM! THEN... FOUR-NINE-SEVEN-A-AND-B-AND-X...

MINK'S MOTHER WITHDREW, LAUGHING, TO DUST THE HALL WITH AN ELECTRO-DUSTER MAGNET...
...AND A FORK... AND A STRING... AND A HEX... HEX... HEXAGONY... HEXAGONAL!

AT LUNCH, MINK GULPED MILK AT ONE TOSS AND WAS AT THE DOOR. MRS. MORRIS SLAPPED THE TABLE...
YOU SIT RIGHT BACK DOWN AND FINISH...
BUT MOM! DRILL'S WAITING FOR ME!

DRILL? WHAT A PECULIAR NAME! WHO'S DRILL?
YOU DON'T KNOW HIM, MOM. YOU'LL MAKE FUN. EVERYBODY POKES FUN. GEE, DARN. I GOT TO RUN IF WE WANT TO HAVE THE INVASION!

WHO'S INVADING WHAT?
MARTIANS... INVADING EARTH!
2

MRS. MORRIS HID HER MOUTH BEHIND HER HAND...
YOU'RE LAUGHING! SEE? YOU'D... YOU'D KILL DRILL AND EVERYBODY.
I...I DIDN'T MEAN TO, MINK. SO... SO DRILL'S A MARTIAN?
UH-HUH! AND HE'S HAD A HARD TIME. THEY COULDN'T FIGURE A WAY TO ATTACK EARTH, DRILL SAYS IN ORDER TO MAKE A GOOD FIGHT, YOU GOT TO HAVE A NEW WAY OF SURPRISING PEOPLE! AND YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE HELP...FROM YOUR ENEMY!
A FIFTH COLUMN, EH?
YEAH! THAT'S WHAT DRILL SAID. AND THEY COULDN'T FIGURE A WAY TO SURPRISE EARTH OR GET HELP... UNTIL, ONE DAY, THEY THOUGHT OF THE CHILDREN!
WELL!
AND THEY THOUGHT OF HOW GROWNUPS ARE SO BUSY THEY NEVER PAY ATTENTION TO CHILDREN! AND THEN THERE'S THE DIM-DIMS!
DIM-DIMS?
DIMENSIONS! FOUR OF 'EM! AN' THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT KIDS UNDER NINE, AND IMAGINATION... AND...
WELL, IF YOU WANT TO HAVE YOUR INVASION BEFORE YOUR BATH...YOU'D BETTER HURRY ALONG...
DRILL SAYS I WON'T HAVE TO TAKE BATHS AFTER THE INVASION. NO MORE BATHS... AND WE CAN STAY UP TILL TEN O'CLOCK TO WATCH TELEVISION... AND GO TO TWO MOVIES ON SATURDAY 'STEAD OF ONE... AND HAVE ALL THE COMICS WE WANT...
WELL, MR. DRILL BETTER MIND HIS P'S AND Q'S. I'LL CALL UP HIS MOTHER AND...
DRILL SAYS PARENTS ARE DANGEROUS. 'CAUSE WHY? 'CAUSE YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN MARTIANS! THEY'RE GOING TO LET US RUN THE WORLD! THE KIDS...
THAT'S NICE! NOW, RUN OUT AND PLAY...
MINK WENT TO THE DOOR...
MOM! WHAT'S IM-PRES-SION-ABLE MEAN?
WHY, IT MEANS IT MEANS...TO BE A CHILD, DEAR.
MINK RAN OUT, THEN STUCK HER HEAD BACK IN...
MOM! I'LL BE SURE YOU WON'T BE HURT MUCH...REALLY!
WELL... THANKS!
3

AT FOUR O'CLOCK, THE AUDIO-VISOR BUZZED. MARY MORRIS FLIPPED THE TAB AND THE SCREEN LIT UP...
HELLO, HELEN! THIS IS A SURPRISE! HOW ARE THINGS IN NEW YORK? YOU LOOK TIRED!
HELLO, MARY. I AM TIRED. THE CHILDREN. UNDERFOOT...
MY MINK, TOO. THE SUPER-INVASION!
ARE YOUR KIDS PLAYING THAT GAME TOO?
LORD, YES. WERE WE THIS BAD WHEN WE WERE KIDS, HELEN?
WORSE. DON'T KNOW HOW MY PARENTS PUT UP WITH ME. I GUESS PARENTS LEARN TO SHUT THEIR EARS!
A SILENCE...
WHAT'S WRONG, MARY?
EH? OH, NOTHING. JUST THINKING... ABOUT SHUTTING EARS AND SUCH. NEVER MIND. WHERE WERE WE?
MY BOY TIM'S GOT A CRUSH ON SOME GUY NAMED... DRILL, I THINK IT IS!
MUST BE A NEW PASS-WORD. MINK LIKES HIM TOO.
DIDN'T KNOW IT HAD GOTTEN AS FAR SOUTH AS PHILADELPHIA, MARY! I TALKED TO MY SISTER IN BOSTON AND SHE SAID HER KIDS ARE WILD ABOUT THIS NEW GAME!
IT... IT MUST BE SWEEP-ING THE... COUNTRY!
AT THIS MOMENT, MINK TROTTED INTO THE KITCHEN. MARY MORRIS TURNED FROM THE AUDIO-VISOR...
WHAT'S THAT YOU HAVE THERE, MINK?
A YO-YO, MOM. WATCH.
MINK FLUNG THE YO-YO DOWN ITS STRING. REACHING THE END, IT... VANISHED...
SEE?
GASP...
DIBBLING HER FINGER, MINK MADE THE YO-YO REAPPEAR AND ZIP UP THE STRING...
D-DO THAT AGAIN!
CAN'T! ZERO HOUR'S FIVE O'CLOCK! 'BYE!
4

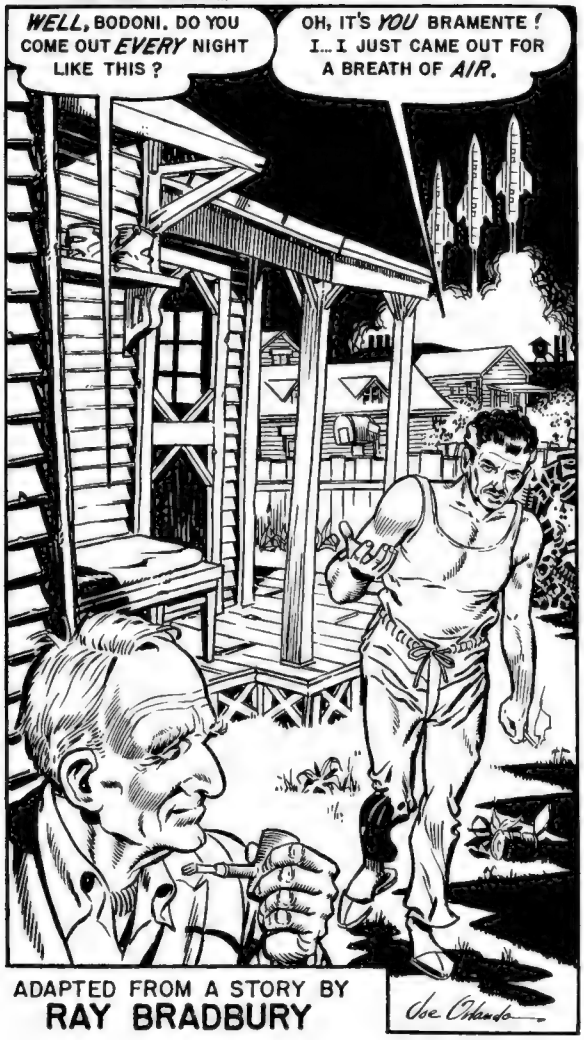
ON THE AUDIO-VISOR HELEN LAUGHED... TIM BROUGHT ONE OF THOSE YO-YOS IN THIS MORNING, MARY. WHEN I GOT CURIOUS, HE SAID HE WOULDN'T SHOW IT TO ME. AND WHEN I TRIED TO WORK IT, FINALLY, IT WOULDN'T WORK!
MRS. MORRIS WHISPERED...
YOU'RE ...NOT IMPRESSIONABLE, HELEN!
WHAT?
NEVER MIND. SOMETHING I THOUGHT OF, CAN I HELP YOU, HELEN?
I WANTED TO GET THAT BLACK AND WHITE CAKE RECIPE...
THE HOUR DROWSED BY. THE DAY WANED. THE SUN LOWERED IN THE PEACEFUL BLUE SKY. ONE LITTLE GIRL RAN OFF CRYING...
MINK, WAS THAT PEGGY ANN CRYING?
YEAH. SHE'S A SCAREBABY. WE WON'T LET HER PLAY, NOW. SHE'S GETTING TOO OLD TO PLAY.
MINK WAS BENT OVER IN THE YARD NEAR THE ROSE BUSH...
I GUESS SHE GREW UP ALL OF A SUDDEN.
MINK! DID YOU HIT PEGGY ANN?
NO. HONEST. YOU ASK HER. IT WAS SOMETHING... WELL, SHE'S JUST A SCAREDY PANTS. GOLLY. GOLLY!
WHAT'S WRONG?
THE RING OF CHILDREN DREW IN AROUND MINK WHERE SHE SCOWLED AT HER WORK WITH SPOONS AND A KIND OF SQUARE-SHAPED ARRANGEMENT OF HAMMERS AND PIPES...
DRILL'S STUCK HALFWAY.
HALFWAY?
IF WE COULD ONLY GET HIM ALL THE WAY THROUGH, IT'D BE EASIER. THEN ALL THE OTHERS COULD COME THROUGH AFTER HIM!
CAN I... HELP?
NO'M, THANKS. I'LL FIX IT.
ALL RIGHT, DEAR. HALF AN HOUR MORE. THEN BATH-TIME...
5

MRS. MORRIS WENT BACK INSIDE. TIME PASSED. A CURIOUS, WAITING SILENCE CAME UPON THE STREET, DEEPENING...
FIVE O'CLOCK...FIVE O'CLOCK. TIME'S A-WASTING. FIVE O'CLOCK...
THE VOICE-CLOCK SANG SOFTLY IN A QUIET MUSICAL VOICE, THEN PURRED AWAY IN SILENCE. MRS. MORRIS CHUCKLED IN HER THROAT...
ZERO...HOUR...
MR. MORRIS'S BEETLE CAR HUMMED INTO THE DRIVEWAY. HE GOT OUT, STOOD FOR A MOMENT WATCHING THE CHILDREN, THEN CAME INSIDE...
HELLO, DARLING.
HELLO, HENRY.
MRS. MORRIS LISTENED. THE CHILDREN WERE SILENT...TOO SILENT. MR. MORRIS EMPTIED HIS PIPE...
SWELL DAY. MAKES YOU GLAD TO BE *ALIVE*.
WHAT'S *THAT?*
A BUZZING SOUND...MARY GOT UP SUDDENLY, HER EYES WIDENING...
THOSE CHILDREN HAVEN'T ANYTHING *DANGEROUS* OUT THERE, HAVE THEY?
NOTHING BUT *PIPES* AND *HAMMERS*. *WHY?*
THE BUZZING CONTINUED...
NOTHING ELECTRICAL?
HECK, NO! I LOOKED.
JUST THE SAME, YOU'D BETTER TELL THEM TO QUIT. IT'S AFTER FIVE. TELL THEM...HEH, HEH... TELL THEM TO PUT OFF THEIR INVASION UNTIL TOMORROW...
THE BUZZING GREW LOUDER...
SAY! WHAT *ARE* THEY UP TO? I'D BETTER GO LOOK...
THE EXPLOSION...
6

THE HOUSE SHOOK WITH A DULL SOUND. THERE WERE OTHER EXPLOSIONS IN OTHER YARDS ON OTHER STREETS...
UP THIS WAY! IN THE ATTIC!
IT'S NOT UP THERE! IT'S OUTSIDE!
THERE WAS NO TIME TO ARGUE WITH HENRY. LET HIM THINK HER INSANE! SHRIEKING, SHE RAN UPSTAIRS...
I'LL SHOW YOU! HURRY! HURRY! I'LL SHOW YOU!
MARY!
ANOTHER EXPLOSION OUTSIDE. THE CHILDREN SCREAMED WITH DELIGHT AS IF AT A GREAT FIREWORKS DISPLAY. HENRY RAN AFTER MARY... UP INTO THE ATTIC...
THERE, THERE. WE'RE SAFE UNTIL TONIGHT! MAYBE WE CAN SNEAK OUT. MAYBE WE CAN ESCAPE.
ARE YOU CRAZY, MARY? WHAT'S GOT INTO YOU?
SHE WAS BABBLING WILD STUFF NOW. IT CAME OUT OF HER. ALL THE SUBCONSCIOUS SUSPICIONS AND FEAR. SHE SLAMMED THE DOOR... LOCKED IT... FLUNG THE KEY INTO A FAR, CLUTTERED CORNER...
WHY'D YOU THROW THE KEY AWAY, MARY?
QUIET! THEY WILL HEAR US. OH, GOD, THEY'LL FIND US SOON ENOUGH...
BELOW THEM, MINK'S VOICE. THEN FOOTSTEPS CAME INTO THE HOUSE. HEAVY FOOTSTEPS...
WHO'S THAT TRAMPING AROUND DOWN THERE?
MOM? DAD? WHERE ARE YOU?
HEAVY FEET. TWENTY, THIRTY, FORTY OF THEM...
WHO'S DOWNSTAIRS?
HUSH, HENRY! OH, NONONONO! PLEASE BE QUIET! THEY MIGHT GO AWAY!
HEAVY, VERY HEAVY FOOTSTEPS CAME UP THE STAIRS. MINK LEADING THEM. THEY TREMBLED TOGETHER IN SILENCE IN THE ATTIC, MR. AND MRS. MORRIS. THEY STOOD SHIVERING IN THE DARK SILENCE...
MOM? DAD?
A LITTLE HUMMING SOUND, THE ATTIC LOCK MELTED. THE DOOR OPENED. MINK PEERED INSIDE...TALL BLUE SHADOWS BEHIND HER...
PEEKABOO!
-THE END-
7

OUTCAST of the STARS

MANY NIGHTS FIORELLO BODONI WOULD AWAKEN TO HEAR THE ROCKETS SINGING IN THE DARK SKY. HE WOULD TIP-TOE FROM BED, CERTAIN THAT HIS KIND WIFE WAS DREAMING, AND LET HIMSELF OUT INTO THE NIGHT AIR. FOR A SILENT MOMENT HE WOULD LET HIS HEART SOAR ALONE INTO SPACE, FOLLOWING THE ROCKETS. NOW, THIS VERY NIGHT, HE STOOD HALF NAKED IN THE DARKNESS, WATCHING THE FIRE FOUNTAINS MURMURING IN THE AIR... THE ROCKETS ON THEIR LONG WILD WAYS TO MARS AND SATURN AND VENUS...

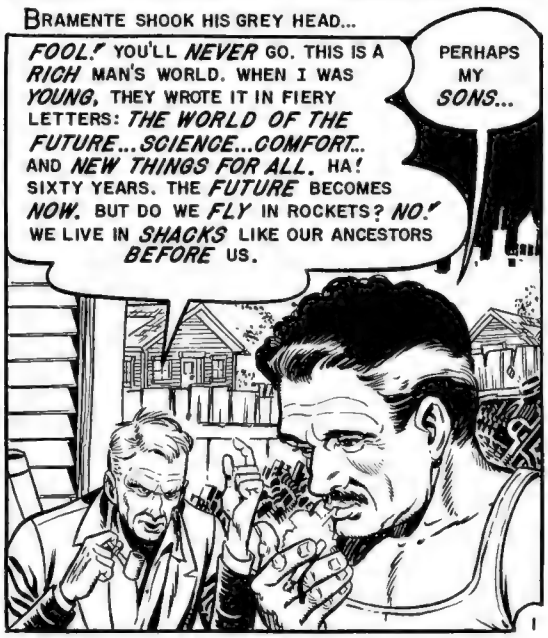


ADAPTED FROM A STORY BY
RAY BRADBURY

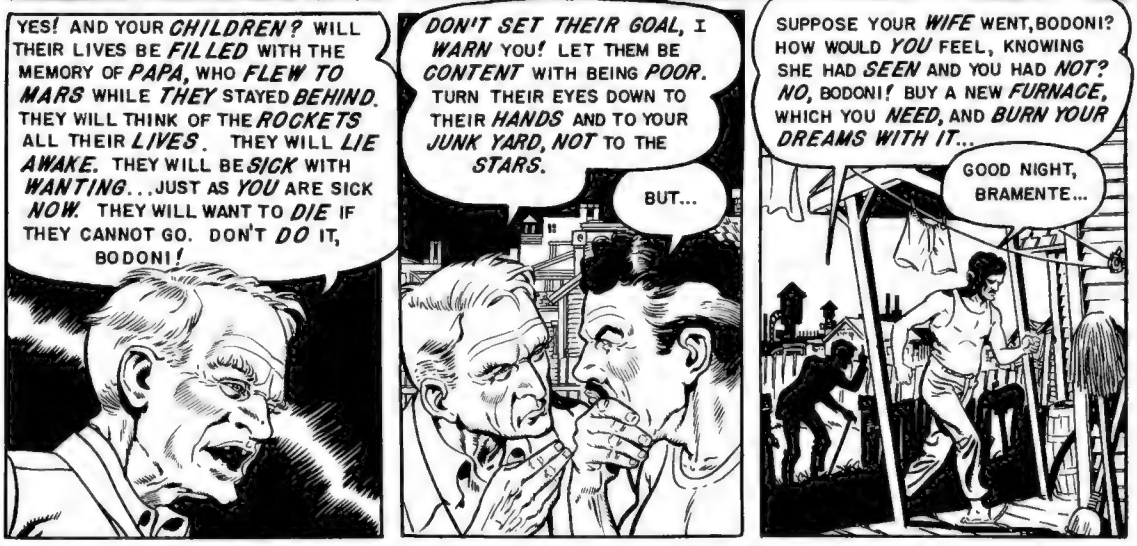
BRAMENTE, WHO ALSO WATCHED THE ROCKETS THROUGH THE MIDNIGHT HUSH, SAT ON A MILK CRATE...

SO? I PREFER THE ROCKETS MYSELF. I WAS A BOY WHEN THEY STARTED, SIXTY YEARS AGO, AND I'VE NEVER BEEN ON ONE YET.
I WILL RIDE UP IN ONE SOMEDAY.

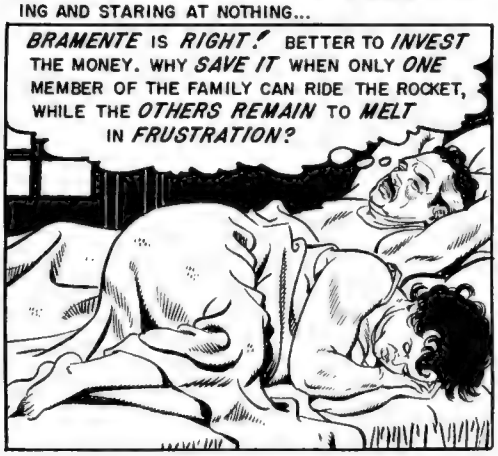
BRAMENTE SHOOK HIS GREY HEAD...


FOOL! YOU'LL NEVER GO. THIS IS A RICH MAN'S WORLD. WHEN I WAS YOUNG, THEY WROTE IT IN FIERY LETTERS: THE WORLD OF THE FUTURE... SCIENCE... COMFORT... AND NEW THINGS FOR ALL. HA! SIXTY YEARS. THE FUTURE BECOMES NOW. BUT DO WE FLY IN ROCKETS? NO! WE LIVE IN SHACKS LIKE OUR ANCESTORS BEFORE US.
PERHAPS MY SONS...

NO! NOT YOUR SONS! NOR THEIR SONS. IT'S THE RICH WHO HAVE DREAMS AND ROCKETS!
OLD MAN, I'VE SAVED THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS! IT TOOK ME SIX YEARS... FOR MY BUSINESS... FOR MACHINERY. BUT EVERY NIGHT FOR A MONTH, NOW, I'VE BEEN AWAKE. I HEAR THE ROCKETS, I THINK. AND TONIGHT, I'VE MADE UP MY MIND. ONE OF US WILL FLY TO MARS!
BRAMENTE SNAPPED...
IDIOT! HOW WILL YOU CHOOSE? WHO WILL GO? IF YOU GO, YOUR WIFE WILL HATE YOU. WHEN YOU TELL HER OF YOUR AMAZING TRIP, OVER THE YEARS, WON'T BITTERNESS GNAW AT HER?
NO! NO!

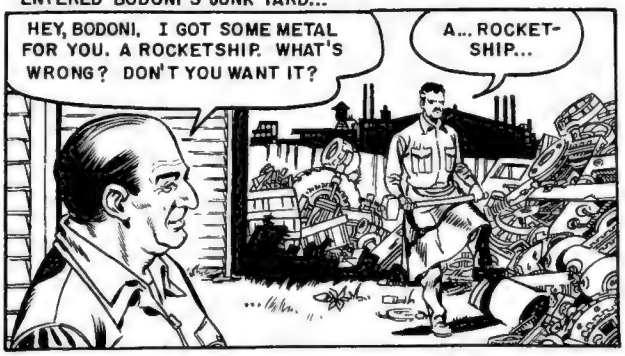

YES! AND YOUR CHILDREN? WILL THEIR LIVES BE FILLED WITH THE MEMORY OF PAPA, WHO FLEW TO MARS WHILE THEY STAYED BEHIND. THEY WILL THINK OF THE ROCKETS ALL THEIR LIVES. THEY WILL LIE AWAKE. THEY WILL BE SICK WITH WANTING... JUST AS YOU ARE SICK NOW. THEY WILL WANT TO DIE IF THEY CANNOT GO. DON'T DO IT, BODONI!
DON'T SET THEIR GOAL, I WARN YOU! LET THEM BE CONTENT WITH BEING POOR. TURN THEIR EYES DOWN TO THEIR HANDS AND TO YOUR JUNK YARD, NOT TO THE STARS.
BUT...
SUPPOSE YOUR WIFE WENT, BODONI? HOW WOULD YOU FEEL, KNOWING SHE HAD SEEN AND YOU HAD NOT? NO, BODONI! BUY A NEW FURNACE, WHICH YOU NEED, AND BURN YOUR DREAMS WITH IT...
GOOD NIGHT, BRAMENTE...

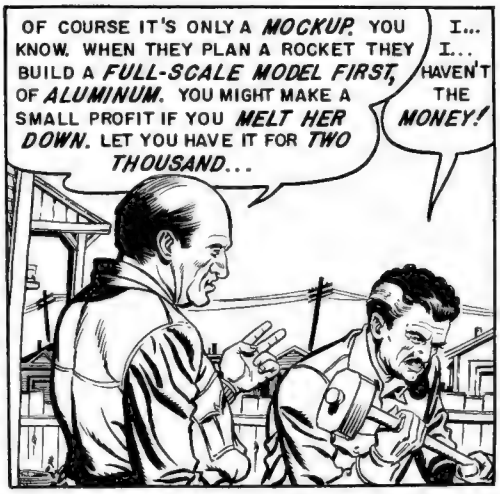
THAT NIGHT, BODONI LAY AMONG HIS NERVOUS CHILDREN, BESIDE HIS MOUNTAINOUS WIFE, TWISTING AND STARING AT NOTHING...

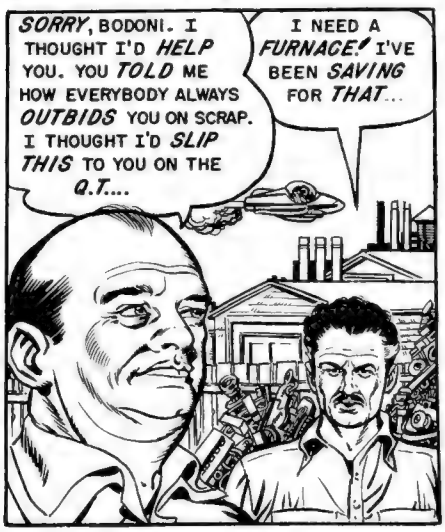

BRAMENTE IS RIGHT! BETTER TO INVEST THE MONEY. WHY SAVE IT WHEN ONLY ONE MEMBER OF THE FAMILY CAN RIDE THE ROCKET, WHILE THE OTHERS REMAIN TO MELT IN FRUSTRATION?

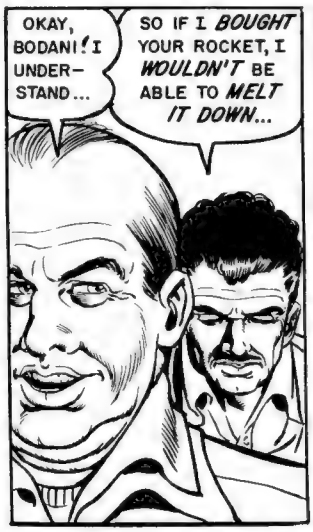
IN THE MORNING, THE CHILDREN RUSHED IN, THE TWO BOYS FIGHTING OVER A TOY ROCKET, THE TWO GIRLS CARRYING DOLLS WHICH DUPLICATED THE INHABITANTS OF MARS, VENUS, AND NEPTUNE, GREEN MANNEQUINS WITH THREE YELLOW EYES AND TWELVE FINGERS...

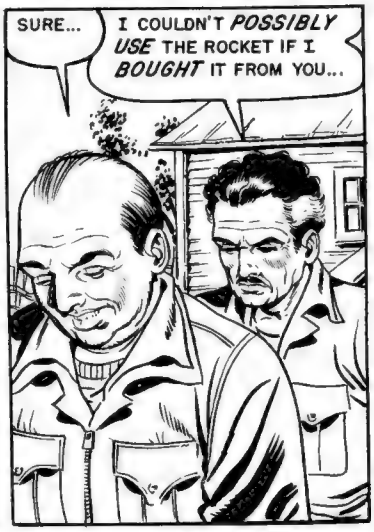
WITH HIS BREAKFAST CURDLED WITHIN HIM, FIORELLO BODONI WORKED IN HIS JUNK YARD, RIPPING METAL, POUNDING IT, READYING IT TO BE MELTED IN THE NEW FURNACE HE WOULD BUY. COMPETITION HAD KEPT HIM ON THE INSANE EDGE OF POVERTY FOR TWENTY YEARS. IN THE AFTERNOON, A MAN ENTERED BODONI'S JUNK YARD...

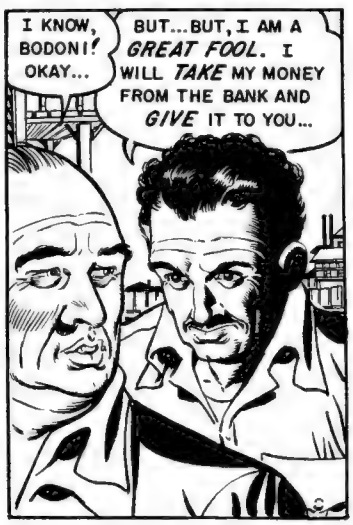


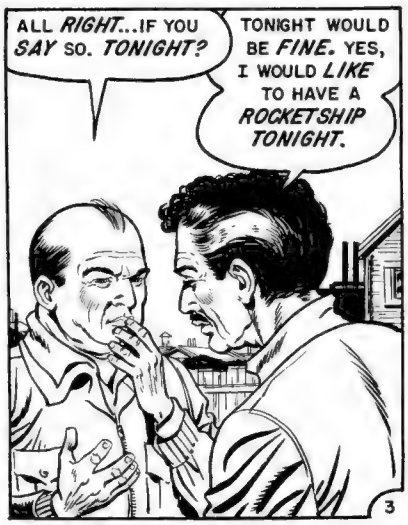

OF COURSE IT'S ONLY A *MOCKUP.* YOU KNOW. WHEN THEY PLAN A ROCKET THEY BUILD A *FULL-SCALE MODEL FIRST,* OF *ALUMINUM.* YOU MIGHT MAKE A SMALL PROFIT IF YOU *MELT HER DOWN.* LET YOU HAVE IT FOR *TWO THOUSAND...*
I... I... HAVEN'T THE *MONEY!*


SORRY, BODONI. I THOUGHT I'D *HELP* YOU. YOU *TOLD* ME HOW EVERYBODY ALWAYS *OUTBIDS* YOU ON SCRAP. I THOUGHT I'D *SLIP THIS* TO YOU ON THE *Q.T....*
I NEED A *FURNACE!* I'VE BEEN *SAVING* FOR *THAT...*









THAT NIGHT, THERE WAS A MOON. THE ROCKET WAS WHITE AND BIG IN THE JUNK YARD. IT HELD THE WHITENESS OF THE MOON AND THE BLUENESS OF THE STARS. BODONI LOOKED AT IT AND LOVED IT. HE WANTED TO PET IT AND LIE AGAINST IT, PRESSING IT WITH HIS CHEEK, TELLING IT ALL THE SECRET WANTS OF HIS HEART...

THE ROCKET SMELLED OF TIME AND DISTANCE. IT WAS LIKE WALKING INTO A CLOCK. IT WAS FINISHED WITH SWISS DELICACY. BODONI WHISPERED EXCITEDLY...

HE SAT IN THE PILOT'S SEAT. HE TOUCHED A LEVER. HE HUMMED IN HIS SHUT MOUTH, HIS EYES CLOSED...

THE HUMMING GREW LOUDER, LOUDER, HIGHER, WILDER, STRANGE, MORE EXHILARATING, TREMBLING IN HIM AND LEANING HIM FORWARD AND PULLING HIM AND THE SHIP IN A ROARING SILENCE AND IN A METAL SCREAMING, WHILE HIS FISTS FLEW OVER THE CONTROLS...

HE FELL BACK, EXHAUSTED AND PANTING. HIS SHAKING HANDS CAME LOOSE OF THE CONTROLS. HE SAT FOR A LONG TIME, BREATHING OUT AND IN, HIS HEART BEATING. HE HEARD THE FAMILY RADIO PLAYING SOME DISTANT MUSIC. HE SAT FOR HALF AN HOUR CONSIDERING THE ROCKET AND HIS FAMILY...

AND THEN HE STEPPED FROM THE ROCKET AND BEGAN TO WALK, AND AS HE WALKED, HE BEGAN TO LAUGH, AND WHEN HE REACHED THE BACK DOOR OF HIS HOUSE, HE TOOK A DEEP BREATH AND CALLED...

THE CHILDREN BALANCED IN THE WINDY JUNK YARD, UNDER THE GLOWING ROCKET, NOT TOUCHING IT YET. THEY STARTED TO CRY. MARIA LOOKED AT HER HUSBAND...

WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE*? TAKEN OUR MONEY FOR *THIS*? IT WILL *NEVER* FLY! ROCKET SHIPS COST *MILLIONS*. HAVE YOU *MILLIONS*?
IT WILL FLY! IT WILL FLY...

HE TURNED TO THE CHILDREN...

NOW, GO TO THE HOUSE, ALL OF YOU. I HAVE PHONE CALLS TO MAKE, WORK TO DO. TOMORROW WE LEAVE! TELL NO ONE, UNDERSTAND? IT'S A *SECRET*.
YES, PAPA...

THE CHILDREN EDGED OFF FROM THE ROCKET, STUMBLING. MARIA WAITED...

WITHOUT A WORD, SHE TURNED AWAY. BODONI WATCHED HER GO... WHISPERING...

BODONI STARTED TO WORK. THROUGH THE MIDNIGHT HOURS TRUCKS CAME, PACKAGES WERE DELIVERED, AND BODONI, SMILING, EXHAUSTED HIS BANK ACCOUNT. WITH BLOW TORCH AND METAL STRIPPING, HE ASSAULTED THE ROCKET, ADDED, TOOK AWAY, WORKED FIERY MAGICS AND SECRET INSULTS UPON IT. HE BOLTED NINE ANCIENT AUTOMOBILE MOTORS INTO THE EMPTY ENGINE ROOM. THEN HE WELDED THE ENGINE ROOM SHUT, SO NONE COULD SEE HIS HIDDEN LABORS...

AT DAWN, HE ENTERED THE KITCHEN...

SHE WOULD NOT SPEAK TO HIM...

AT SUNSET, HE CALLED TO THE CHILDREN...

WHAT *KIND* OF ROCKET CAN YOU BUY FOR *TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS*? A *BAD* ONE! IT WILL *BLOW UP*. YOU WILL BE *KILLED* IN THAT ROCKET. I WON'T *LET* YOU...
GIVE ME THE KEY TO THE CLOSET, MARIA!

HE PUT OUT HIS HAND...

5

THE CHILDREN HURRIED TO THE ROCKET. BODONI STOOD BEFORE HIS WIFE...

AT THE DOOR OF THE ROCKET, THE FATHER SAID...

LISTEN, CHILDREN. THIS ROCKET IS VERY OLD. IT WILL FLY ONLY ONE MORE JOURNEY. IT WILL NOT FLY AGAIN. THIS WILL BE THE ONE TRIP OF YOUR LIFE. KEEP YOUR EYES WIDE...
YES, PAPA...

LISTEN. KEEP YOUR EARS CLEAN. SMELL THE SMELLS OF THE ROCKET. FEEL. REMEMBER. SO WHEN YOU RETURN, YOU WILL TALK OF IT ALL THE REST OF YOUR LIVES.
YES, PAPA...

THE SHIP WAS QUIET AS A STOPPED CLOCK. THE AIRLOCK HISSED SHUT BEHIND THEM. HE STRAPPED THEM ALL, LIKE TINY MUMMIES, INTO RUBBER HAMMOCKS...

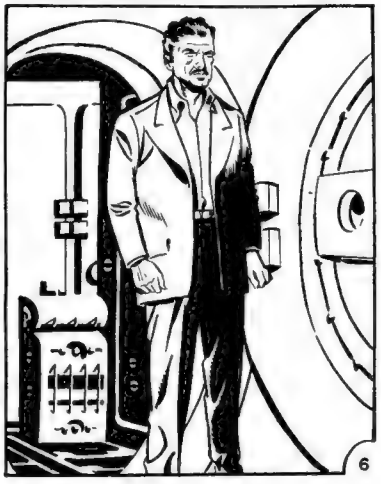
HE JERKED TEN SWITCHES. THE ROCKET THUNDERED AND LEAPED. THE CHILDREN DANCED IN THEIR HAMMOCKS, SCREAMING...

THE MOON DREAMED BY. METEORS BROKE INTO FIREWORKS. TIME FLOWED AWAY. THE CHILDREN SHOUTED. RELEASED FROM THEIR HAMMOCKS, HOURS LATER, THEY PEERED FROM THE PORTS...

THE ROCKET DROPPED PINK PETALS OF FIRE. THE CHILDREN'S EYES DROPPED SHUT. AT LAST THEY HUNG LIKE DRUNKEN MOTHS IN THEIR COCOON HAMMOCKS... ASLEEP...

BODONI TIPTOED TO THE AIRLOCK. HE PRESSED A BUTTON. THE AIRLOCK DOOR SWUNG WIDE...

HE STEPPED OUT...

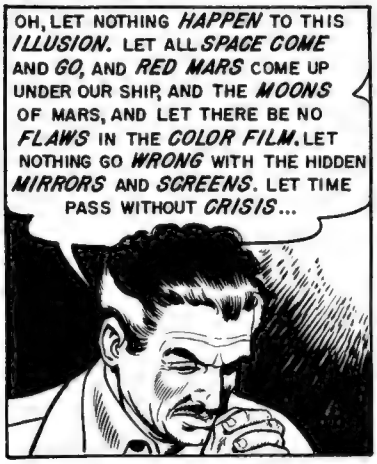


INTO SPACE? INTO INKY TIDES OF METEOR AND GASEOUS TORCH? INTO SWIFT MILEAGES AND INFINITE DIMENSIONS? NO. BODONI SMILED...

ALL ABOUT THE QUIVERING ROCKET LAY THE JUNK YARD. MARIA STOOD IN THE KITCHEN WINDOW. BODONI WAVED TO HER...

IN THE CENTER OF THE JUNK YARD, MANUFACTURING A MAGIC DREAM, STOOD THE QUIVERING PURRING ROCKET...SHAKING AND ROARING, BOUNCING THE NETTED CHILDREN LIKE FLIES IN A WEB...

BODONI WITHDREW INTO THE ROCKET. HE BREATHED EASILY. HE PRAYED...


OH, LET NOTHING *HAPPEN* TO THIS *ILLUSION*. LET ALL *SPACE COME* AND *GO*, AND *RED MARS* COME UP UNDER OUR SHIP, AND THE *MOONS* OF MARS, AND LET THERE BE NO *FLAWS* IN THE *COLOR FILM*. LET NOTHING GO *WRONG* WITH THE HIDDEN *MIRRORS* AND *SCREENS*. LET TIME PASS WITHOUT *CRISIS*...

BODONI AWOKE. RED MARS FLOATED NEAR THE ROCKET. THE CHILDREN SQUEALED...

BODONI LOOKED AND SAW RED MARS AND IT WAS GOOD AND THERE WERE NO FLAWS AND HE WAS VERY HAPPY...

AT SUNSET OF THE FIFTH DAY, THE ROCKET STOPPED SHUDDERING. BODONI ANNOUNCED...

THEY WALKED ACROSS THE JUNK YARD, THEIR BLOOD SINGING, THEIR FACES GLOWING...

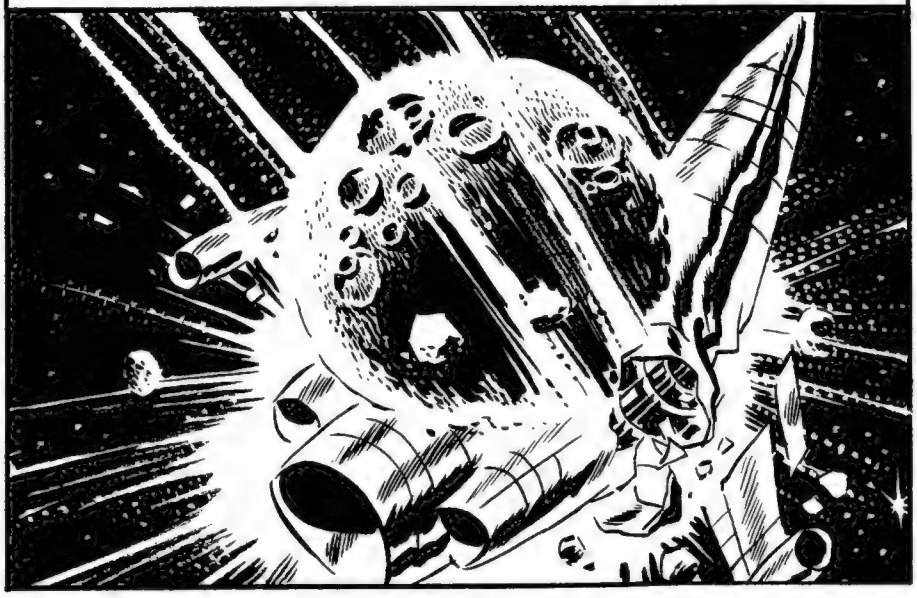
AT BEDTIME, THE CHILDREN GATHERED BEFORE BODONI...

VERY LATE IN THE NIGHT, BODONI OPENED HIS EYES. HIS WIFE WHISPERED...

NOW I *SEE*. *NOW* I *UNDER-STAND*. YOU ARE THE *BEST FATHER* IN THE *WORLD*. PERHAPS...SOME NIGHT, YOU MIGHT TAKE *ME* ON JUST A *LITTLE* TRIP...
JUST A *LITTLE* ONE, PERHAPS, MARIA!
THE END

He Walked Among Us

An Illustrated Man Variation



He Walked Among Us

IN THE YEAR 2963, A ROCKET SHIP OF *'THE GALACTIC EXPLORATION AUTHORITY'*...WHICH HAD ITS HEADQUARTERS ON EARTH...PLUNGED DOWNWARD FROM THE SKY OF A STRANGE UNEXPLORED PLANET IN A SOLAR SYSTEM LOCATED AT THE EXTREME EDGE OF OUR FARFLUNG GALAXY AND CAME TO REST ON ITS UNFAMILIAR SURFACE! A PORT OPENED IN THE SHIP'S GLEAMING SIDE, AND A LADDER EXTENDED TO THE GROUND...

WELL, KRAFT! *THERE* IT *IS!* AND YOU'VE A *BIG JOB!* IN THE NEXT *FOUR YEARS*, YOU'RE TO FIND OUT ALL YOU CAN ABOUT THIS *PLANET* AND ITS *INHABITANTS!* YOU'LL HAVE TO CLASSIFY ALL THE *ANIMAL LIFE* AND *VEGETATION*... AS WELL AS GETTING TOGETHER A COMPLETE REPORT ON THE *MINERAL DEPOSITS!*
RIGHT, COMMANDER!

'THE GALACTIC EXPLORATION AUTHORITY'.. FOR THE PREVIOUS EIGHT HUNDRED YEARS... HAD BEEN SENDING ROCKETS ALL OVER THE GALAXY! THESE SHIPS WOULD DROP TECHNICIANS OFF ON EACH PLANET THAT WAS CAPABLE OF SUPPORTING LIFE! *JEROME KRAFT* WAS ONE OF THESE TECHNICIANS...

LARGE QUANTITIES OF DEHYDRATED FOODS AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES, AS WELL AS SCIENTIFIC EQUIPMENT, WERE UNLOADED FROM THE ROCKET SHIP...

WE'RE LEAVING YOU *MORE* THAN ENOUGH SUPPLIES, KRAFT! *THIS* IS A DESOLATE ENOUGH SECTION, SO I'D SUGGEST THAT YOU STORE THE BULK OF IT HERE TILL YOU NEED IT!
RIGHT, SIR! I'LL BE OKAY!
1

THE SHIP'S COMMANDER SHOOK JERRY'S HAND WARMLY...

THEN HE TURNED AND RE-ENTERED THE ROCKET! THE PORT SWUNG CLOSED! WITH A DEAFENING ROAR, THE SHIP ROSE SKYWARD...

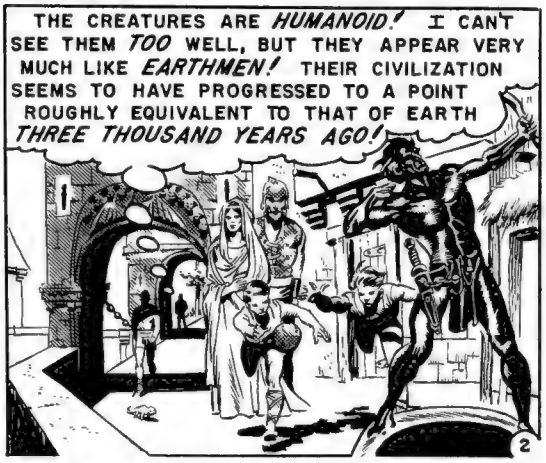
JERRY KRAFT WATCHED UNTIL THE GREYISH TRAIL OF ROCKET EXHAUST DISAPPEARED INTO THE BLUE! THEN HE TURNED TO THE ARRAY OF EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES BEFORE HIM...

SEVERAL HOURS LATER...HIS PROVISIONS WELL HIDDEN...JERRY KRAFT, CARRYING IN A SIDE-PACK ONLY WHAT HE FELT HE'D NEED, STARTED TO EXPLORE THE ALIEN PLANET...

FOR SIX DAYS, JERRY MOVED ACROSS THE STRANGE TERRAIN, STUDYING THE VARIETIES OF ALIEN CREATURES AND VEGETATION HE'D COME ACROSS...

ANOTHER DAY'S JOURNEY ALONG THE WELL-WORN ROAD AND JERRY FINALLY SAW IT UP AHEAD OF HIM... A SETTLEMENT, SPREADING LAZILY BENEATH THE PLANET'S BLAZING SUN...

JERRY CAUTIOUSLY EDGED UP TO THE TOWN'S OUTSKIRTS...


THE CREATURES ARE HUMANOID! I CAN'T SEE THEM TOO WELL, BUT THEY APPEAR VERY MUCH LIKE EARTHMEN! THEIR CIVILIZATION SEEMS TO HAVE PROGRESSED TO A POINT ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT TO THAT OF EARTH THREE THOUSAND YEARS AGO!
1
2

KEEPING WELL HIDDEN, KRAFT MOVED INTO THE SETTLEMENT! THE CREATURES WERE INDEED LIKE HUMAN BEINGS! BOTH MEN AND WOMEN WERE DRESSED IN LONG FLOWING ROBES...ON THEIR FEET, THEY WORE SANDAL-LIKE SHOES! THE BUILDINGS APPEARED TO BE CONSTRUCTED OF BRICK, STONE, AND A CEMENT-LIKE SUBSTANCE...

* *IAMS*...INTELLIGENT ALIEN MONSTERS! BY 2952, G.E.A. HAD DISCOVERED INTELLIGENT LIFE-FORMS ON 914 PLANETS OF OUR GALAXY... ONLY *ONE THIRD* OF WHICH WERE *HUMANOID.....!*

ONE OF THE ALIENS AMBLING THROUGH THE STREETS TURNED UP THE ALLEY WHERE JERRY WAS HIDING! HE DUCKED INTO A DOORWAY AND LEANED AGAINST THE DOOR! IT CLICKED OPEN...

WHEN JERRY'S EYES HAD BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO THE GLOOM, HE LOOKED AROUND! AN ALIEN ROBE HUNG FROM A PEG ON THE WALL...

SOMETHING WAS CRYING IN THE NEXT ROOM! JERRY PEERED IN...

JERRY MOVED TOWARD IT! THE YOUNG ALIEN'S FACE WAS FLUSHED AND PERSPIRED! JERRY TOUCHED THE CREATURE'S FOREHEAD...

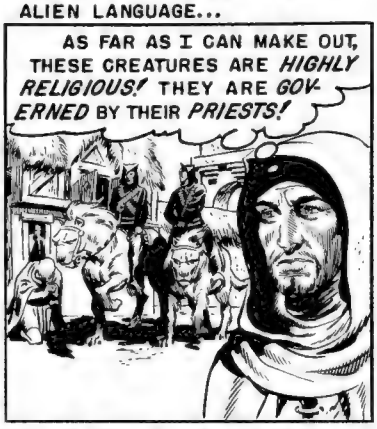
JERRY FUMBLED UNDER HIS STOLEN ROBE AND BROUGHT OUT A SMALL HYPODERMIC CAPSULE...

I'LL GIVE HIM A SHOT OF *ANTI-BACILLUM!* THE LIFE HERE EXISTS BY THE USUAL *OXYGEN METABOLISM,* SO THIS OUGHT TO FIX HIM UP IN A MATTER OF MINUTES!
SOB... SOB...
3

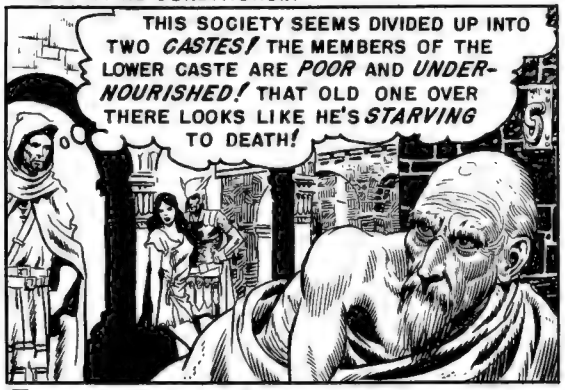
JERRY DIDN'T NOTICE THE WIDE-EYED FIGURE ENTER BEHIND HIM AS HE ADMINISTERED THE DRUG! SOON THE YOUNG ONE'S FACE COOLED... HIS FEVER-FLUSHED CHEEKS PALED...

THE FEMALE ALIEN WATCHED IN AWE AS HER OFFSPRING SAT UP AND SMILED! THEN SHE THREW HERSELF AT JERRY'S FEET, KISSING HIS HAND...

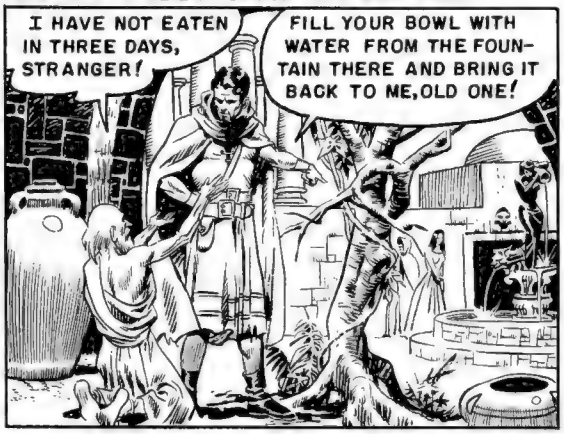
KRAFT DARTED OUT OF THE BUILDING INTO THE CROWDED STREET! HE SPENT THE REST OF THE DAY STRAINING HIS EARS, TRYING TO HEAR SNATCHES OF CONVERSATION... TRYING TO LEARN THE ALIEN LANGUAGE...



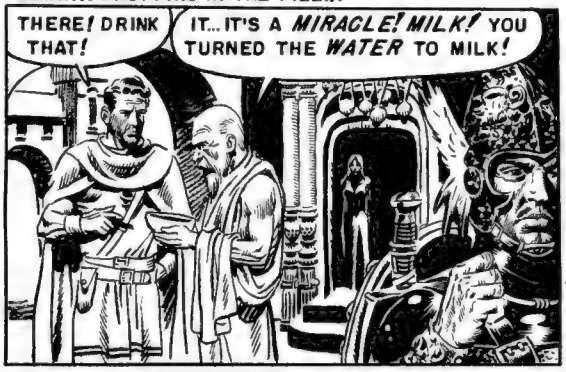
IT TOOK JERRY SEVERAL DAYS TO ANALYZE THE GUTTERAL TONGUE... DURING WHICH TIME HE MOVED ABOUT AMONG THEM, STUDYING THEIR HABITS... THEIR LIVING CONDITIONS...


THIS SOCIETY SEEMS DIVIDED UP INTO TWO *CASTES!* THE MEMBERS OF THE LOWER CASTE ARE *POOR* AND *UNDERNOURISHED!* THAT OLD ONE OVER THERE LOOKS LIKE HE'S *STARVING* TO DEATH!

KRAFT APPROACHED THE AGED ALIEN AND SPOKE TO HIM IN THE ALIEN TONGUE HE'D MASTERED...



THE RAGGED OLD BEGGAR STAGGERED TO THE PUBLIC FOUNTAIN AND FILLED HIS BOWL WITH WATER! MEANWHILE, KRAFT TOOK OUT A MILK-ANHYDRATE PILL FROM BENEATH HIS ROBE! WHEN THE OLD ONE RETURNED, JERRY PASSED HIS HAND OVER THE BOWL... DROPPING IN THE PILL...

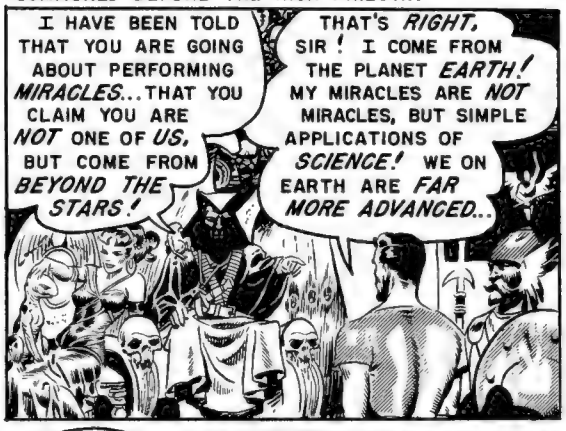


OTHER ALIENS GATHERED AROUND KRAFT, WIDE-EYED IN AMAZEMENT! MANY OF THEM WERE HUNGRY AND SICK! JERRY FELT SORRY FOR THEM! AGAIN AND AGAIN HE DROPPED INTO THEIR OUTSTRETCHED BOWLS OF WATER VARIOUS DEHYDRATED FOOD PILLS...

IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, JERRY WAS ACCLAIMED BY THE ALIEN POPULACE FOR HIS 'MIRACLES'! HE CONTINUED TO GO ABOUT AMONG THEM, CURING THE DISEASED ONES WITH HIS WONDER DRUGS...FEEDING THE STARVING WITH HIS DEHYDRATED FOOD PILLS...

HE IS OUR SAVIOR... OUR DELIVERER! HE HAS BEEN SENT TO US BY MABUMA, OUR DEITY!
NO! WAIT! YOU ARE WRONG! MY NAME IS KRAFT! I CAME FROM EARTH...FROM FAR AWAY...UP THERE AMONG THE STARS!

TALES OF KRAFT'S INCREDIBLE FEATS SOON REACHED THE ALIENS' LEADERS...AND HE WAS SUMMONED BEFORE THE HIGH PRIEST...


I HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT YOU ARE GOING ABOUT PERFORMING MIRACLES...THAT YOU CLAIM YOU ARE NOT ONE OF US, BUT COME FROM BEYOND THE STARS!
THAT'S RIGHT, SIR! I COME FROM THE PLANET EARTH! MY MIRACLES ARE NOT MIRACLES, BUT SIMPLE APPLICATIONS OF SCIENCE! WE ON EARTH ARE FAR MORE ADVANCED...

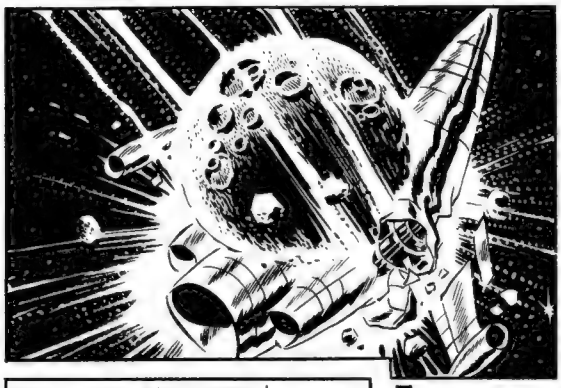
YOU LIE! THERE IS NO OTHER WORLD THAN THIS ONE! THE SUN AND THE STARS REVOLVE AROUND US! WE ARE THE CENTER OF EVERYTHING!
HAVE IT YOUR OWN WAY, SIR! I HAVE NO WISH TO ARGUE WITH YOU!

THEY SAY YOU CAN CURE THE SICK BY TOUCHING THEM...FEED THE STARVING BY TURNING WATER INTO FOOD!
NOT EXACTLY! BUT...I'M AFRAID YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND, SIR!

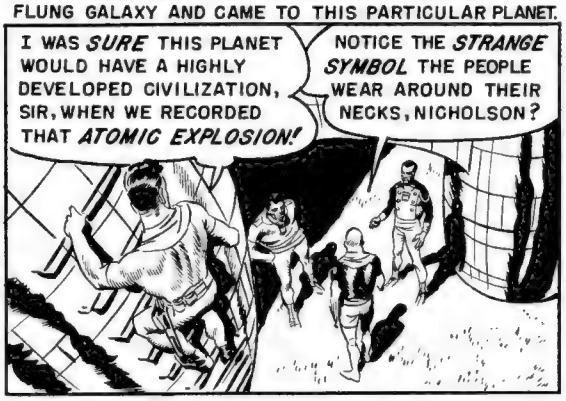
WELL, MIRACLES OR NOT...YOU MUST CEASE PERFORMING THEM FOR MEMBERS OF THE LOWER CASTE! THE RABBLE MUST NOT BE HELPED! I FORBID IT! ONLY THE HIGHER, OR PRIESTLY...
I'M SORRY, SIR, BUT I PLAN TO CONTINUE TO AID THOSE WHO NEED ME THE MOST!

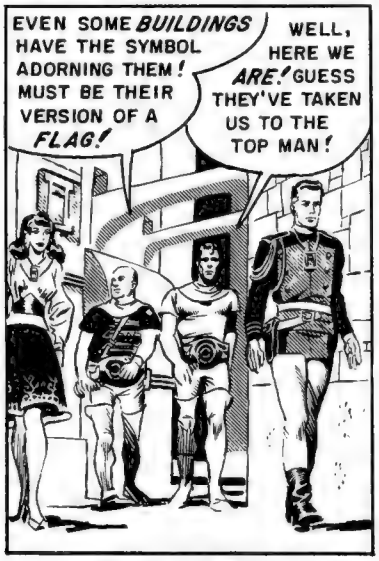
YOU DARE DEFY ME...THE HIGH PRIEST?
EXACTLY! THE RABBLE, AS YOU CALL THEM, HAVE COME TO DEPEND ON ME! AS I SEE IT, YOU BOYS IN THE 'HIGHER' CASTE HAVE BEEN TAKING ADVANTAGE OF YOUR PEOPLE... TO PUT IT MILDLY!

ALMOST SIMULTANEOUSLY, HUNDREDS OF LIGHT YEARS DISTANT, THE GALACTIC EXPLORATION ROCKET SHIP THAT HAD BROUGHT JEROME KRAFT TO THE ALIEN PLANET WAS DESTROYED WHEN A WANDERING ASTEROID CRASHED INTO IT...



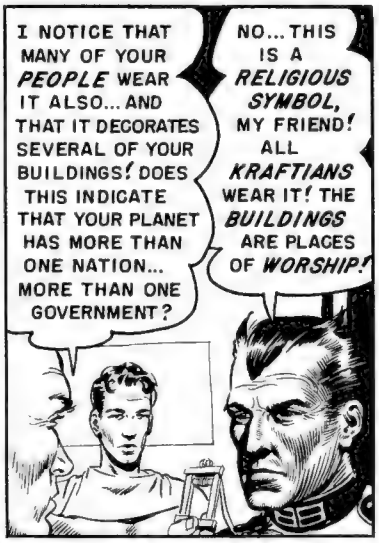
ALL RECORDS WERE LOST! NO SHIP RETURNED FOR KRAFT WHEN THE FOUR YEARS WERE UP! IN FACT, IT WASN'T UNTIL 4903, ALMOST TWO THOUSAND YEARS LATER, THAT MAN ONCE AGAIN TRAVERSED THE FAR-FLUNG GALAXY AND CAME TO THIS PARTICULAR PLANET.

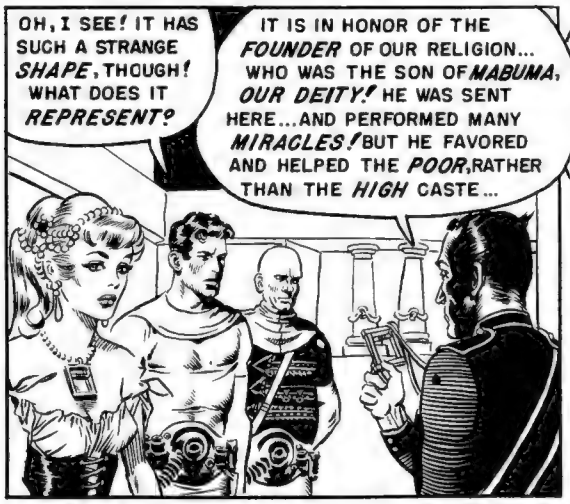

I WAS *SURE* THIS PLANET WOULD HAVE A HIGHLY DEVELOPED CIVILIZATION, SIR, WHEN WE RECORDED THAT *ATOMIC EXPLOSION!*
NOTICE THE *STRANGE SYMBOL* THE PEOPLE WEAR AROUND THEIR NECKS, NICHOLSON?


EVEN SOME *BUILDINGS* HAVE THE SYMBOL ADORNING THEM! MUST BE THEIR VERSION OF A *FLAG!*
WELL, HERE WE *ARE!* GUESS THEY'VE TAKEN US TO THE TOP MAN!

THE EMISSARIES OF THE GREAT GALACTIC EMPIRE WERE USHERED INTO THE PALACE OF THE RULER OF THE ALIEN PEOPLE...

WELCOME! YOU ARE OUR *FIRST VISITORS* FROM SPACE! WE HAVE SO *MUCH* TO *ASK* YOU!
TELL ME, YOUR EXCELLENCY! THAT *SYMBOL* YOU WEAR AROUND YOUR NECK...

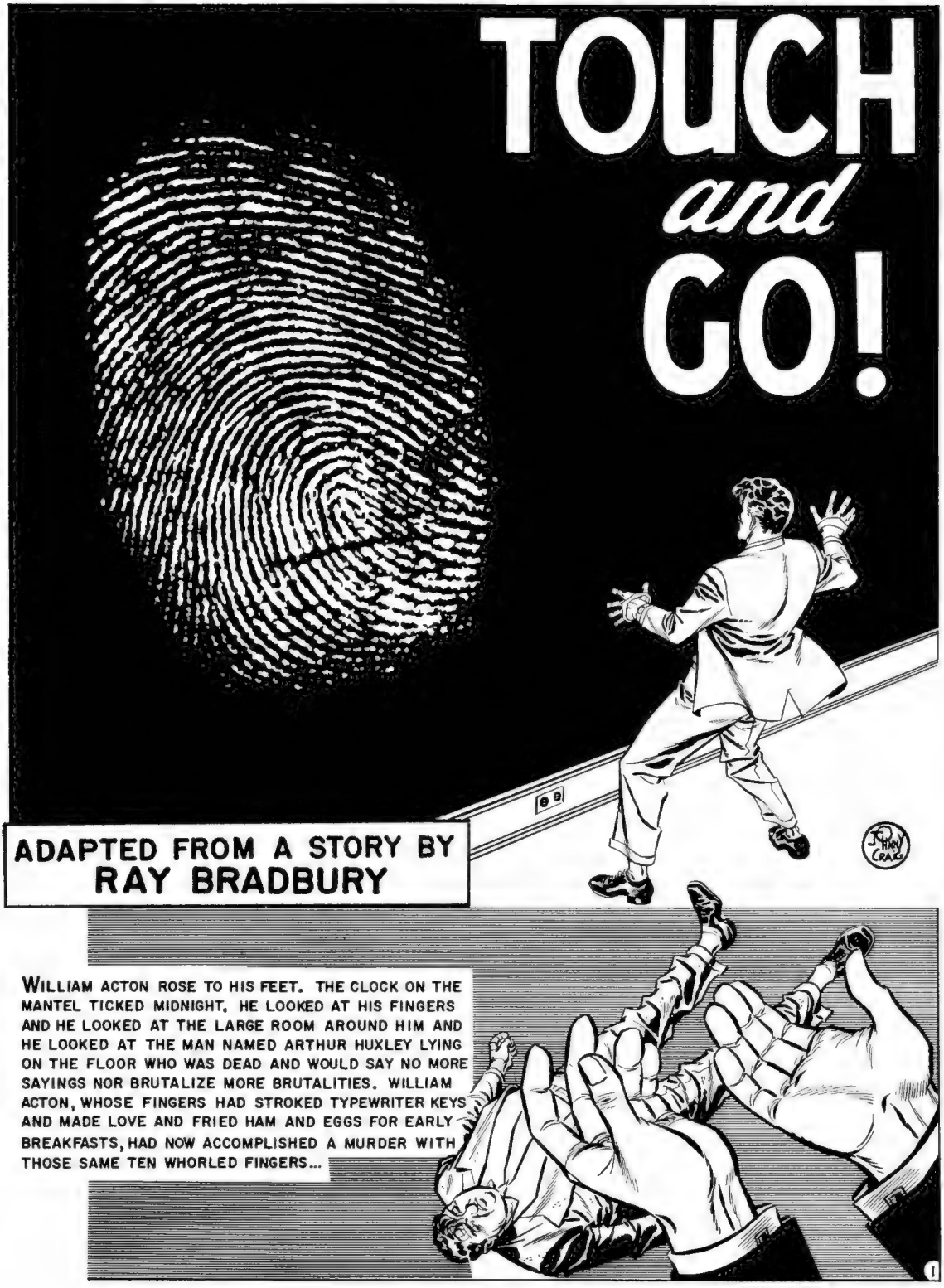

I NOTICE THAT MANY OF YOUR *PEOPLE* WEAR IT ALSO... AND THAT IT DECORATES SEVERAL OF YOUR BUILDINGS! DOES THIS INDICATE THAT YOUR PLANET HAS MORE THAN ONE NATION... MORE THAN ONE GOVERNMENT?
NO... THIS IS A *RELIGIOUS SYMBOL*, MY FRIEND! ALL *KRAFTIANS* WEAR IT! THE *BUILDINGS* ARE PLACES OF *WORSHIP!*


OH, I SEE! IT HAS SUCH A STRANGE *SHAPE*, THOUGH! WHAT DOES IT *REPRESENT?*
IT IS IN HONOR OF THE *FOUNDER* OF OUR RELIGION... WHO WAS THE SON OF *MABUMA*, *OUR DEITY!* HE WAS SENT HERE... AND PERFORMED MANY *MIRACLES!* BUT HE FAVORED AND HELPED THE *POOR*, RATHER THAN THE *HIGH* CASTE...

...SO THE *HIGH PRIEST* ORDERED HIS *EXECUTION!* HE WAS *PUT TO DEATH... BY TORTURE...* ON A *STRETCH RACK!* THIS SYMBOL *REPRESENTS* THAT *STRETCH RACK!*
RATHER A *FAMILIAR STORY*, EH, COMMANDER?
YES, NICHOLSON! *RATHER!*
THE END

STORIES FROM

THE GOLDEN APPLES OF THE SUN


TOUCH
and
GO!
ADAPTED FROM A STORY BY
RAY BRADBURY
WILLIAM ACTON ROSE TO HIS FEET. THE CLOCK ON THE MANTEL TICKED MIDNIGHT. HE LOOKED AT HIS FINGERS AND HE LOOKED AT THE LARGE ROOM AROUND HIM AND HE LOOKED AT THE MAN NAMED ARTHUR HUXLEY LYING ON THE FLOOR WHO WAS DEAD AND WOULD SAY NO MORE SAYINGS NOR BRUTALIZE MORE BRUTALITIES. WILLIAM ACTON, WHOSE FINGERS HAD STROKED TYPEWRITER KEYS AND MADE LOVE AND FRIED HAM AND EGGS FOR EARLY BREAKFASTS, HAD NOW ACCOMPLISHED A MURDER WITH THOSE SAME TEN WHORLED FINGERS...

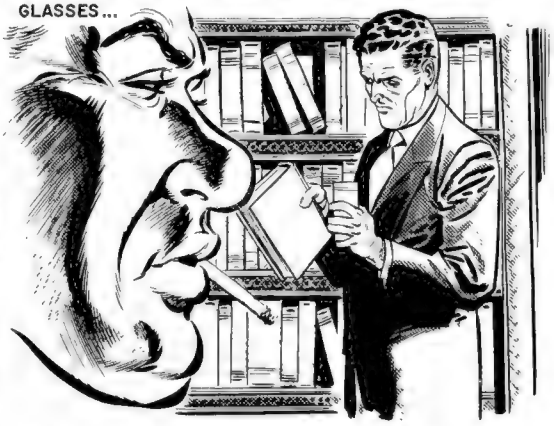
NOW WHAT? HIS EVERY IMPULSE EXPLODED HIM IN A HYSTERIA TOWARD THE DOOR. GET OUT, GET AWAY, RUN, NEVER COME BACK, BOARD A TRAIN, GET A TAXI, GET, GO, RUN, WALK, SAUNTER, BUT GET THE BLAZES *OUT* OF HERE...

HIS HANDS HOVERED BEFORE HIS EYES, FLOATING, TURNING. IT WAS NOT THE HANDS AS HANDS HE WAS INTERESTED IN, NOR THE FINGERS AS FINGERS. HE FOUND INTEREST ONLY IN THE *TIPS* OF HIS FINGERS. THE CLOCK TICKED UPON THE MANTEL...

HE KNELT BY HUXLEY'S BODY, TOOK A HANDKERCHIEF FROM HUXLEY'S POCKET AND BEGAN METHODICALLY TO SWAB HUXLEY'S THROAT WITH IT. HE BRUSHED AND MASSAGED THE FACE AND THE BACK OF THE NECK WITH A FIERCE ENERGY...

HE STOPPED. THERE WAS A MOMENT WHEN HE SAW THE ENTIRE HOUSE, THE HALLS, DOORS, FURNITURE; AND AS CLEARLY AS IF IT WERE BEING REPEATED WORD FOR WORD, HE HEARD HUXLEY TALKING AND HIMSELF TALKING JUST AS THEY HAD TALKED ONLY AN HOUR AGO...

HE HAD *TOUCHED* THE LIBRARY DOOR. HE HAD *TOUCHED* THE BOOKS AND THE LIBRARY TABLE AND *TOUCHED* THE BURGUNDY BOTTLE AND BURGUNDY GLASSES...



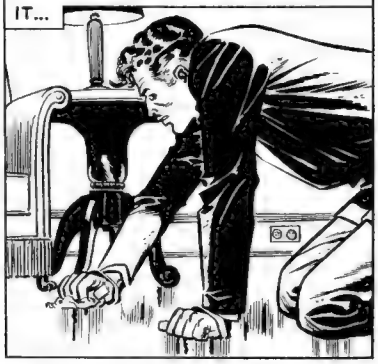
NOW, SQUATTING ON THE FLOOR BESIDE HUXLEY'S COLD BODY WITH THE POLISHING HANDKERCHIEF IN HIS FINGERS, HE STARED AT THE HOUSE, THE WALLS, THE FURNITURE, STUNNED BY WHAT HE REALIZED. HE SHUT HIS EYES, WADDING THE HANDKERCHIEF IN HIS HANDS, BITING HIS LIPS WITH HIS TEETH, PULLING IN ON HIMSELF! THE FINGERPRINTS WERE EVERYWHERE!

A PAIR OF GLOVES. BEFORE HE DID ONE MORE THING, BEFORE HE POLISHED ANOTHER AREA, HE MUST HAVE A PAIR OF GLOVES. HE PUT HIS HANDS IN HIS POCKETS, WALKED TO THE HALL UMBRELLA STAND, THE HATRACK, HUXLEY'S OVERCOAT. HE PULLED OUT THE OVERCOAT POCKETS. NO GLOVES...

HIS HANDS IN HIS POCKETS AGAIN, HE WALKED UPSTAIRS. HE UNTIDIED SEVENTY OR EIGHTY DRAWERS IN SIX UPSTAIRS ROOMS, LEFT THEM WITH TONGUES HANGING OUT. AT THE BOTTOM OF THE EIGHTY-FIFTH DRAWER HE FOUND GLOVES...

DOWN ONTO THE HARDWOOD FLOOR HAD DROPPED MR. HUXLEY, WITH WILLIAM ACTON AFTER HIM. THEY HAD ROLLED AND TUSSLED AND CLAWED AT THE FLOOR, PRINTING IT WITH THEIR FINGERTIPS!

GLOVED, WILLIAM ACTON RETURNED TO THE ROOM AND LABORIOUSLY BEGAN SWABBING EVERY INFESTED INCH OF THE FLOOR. INCH BY INCH, HE POLISHED TILL HE COULD MOST SEE HIS INTENT SWEATING FACE IN IT...

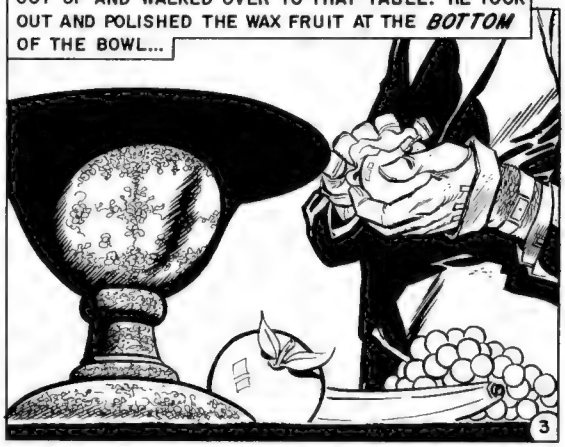


THEN HE CAME TO A TABLE AND POLISHED THE LEG OF IT, ITS SOLID BODY, AND ON TOP, AND HE CAME TO A BOWL OF WAX FRUIT AND HE PLUCKED OUT THE WAX FRUIT AND POLISHED THEM, LEAVING THE FRUIT AT THE BOTTOM UNPOLISHED...

AFTER RUBBING THE TABLE, HE CAME TO A PICTURE FRAME OVER IT...

HE SHINED THE DOORKNOBS, CURRIED THE DOORS FROM HEAD TO FOOT. HE WENT TO ALL THE FURNITURE AND WIPED THE CHAIRS AND RUBBED THE FABRIC. FINGERPRINTS CAN BE FOUND ON FABRIC. HE WENT TO THE BODY, TURNED IT NOW THIS WAY, NOW THAT, AND BURNISHED EVERY SURFACE OF IT. HE EVEN SHINED THE SHOES, CHARGING NOTHING...

WHILE SHINING THE SHOES, HIS FACE TOOK ON A LITTLE TREMOR OF WORRY, AND AFTER A MOMENT HE GOT UP AND WALKED OVER TO THAT TABLE. HE TOOK OUT AND POLISHED THE WAX FRUIT AT THE *BOTTOM* OF THE BOWL...



HE WENT BACK TO THE BODY. BUT AS HE CROUCHED OVER IT, HIS EYE-LIDS TWICKED AND HIS JAW MOVED FROM SIDE TO SIDE AND HE DEBATED... THEN HE GOT UP AND WALKED ONCE MORE TO THE TABLE. HE POLISHED THE PICTURE FRAME...

WHILE POLISHING THE PICTURE FRAME HE DISCOVERED... *THE WALL!*

THAT... IS *SILLY.*

HUXLEY HAD GIVEN HIM A SHOVE AS THEY STRUGGLED. HE HAD FALLEN AGAINST ONE WALL, GOTTEN UP, *TOUCHING* THE WALL...

HE GLANCED AT THE FOUR WALLS...

RIDICULOUS.

FROM THE CORNERS OF HIS EYES HE SAW SOMETHING ON ONE WALL...

I REFUSE TO PAY ATTENTION. THE NEXT ROOM, NOW. I'LL BE METHODICAL. LET'S SEE, WE WERE IN THE HALL, THE LIBRARY, *THIS* ROOM, THE DINING ROOM AND THE KITCHEN.

THERE WAS A SPOT ON THE WALL BEHIND HIM...

WELL, *WASN'T* THERE?

HE TURNED, ANGRILY, AND HE WENT OVER AND HE COULDN'T FIND ANY SPOT. OH, A *LITTLE* ONE, YES, RIGHT... *THERE.* HE DABBED IT. IT WASN'T A FINGERPRINT ANYHOW!

HE LOOKED AT THE WALL AND THE WAY IT WENT OVER TO HIS RIGHT AND OVER TO HIS LEFT AND HOW IT WENT DOWN TO HIS FEET AND UP OVER HIS HEAD AND HE SAID SOFTLY...

NO.

BUT UNKNOWN TO HIS EYES, HIS GLOVED FINGERS MOVED IN A LITTLE RUBBING RHYTHM ON THE WALL.

4

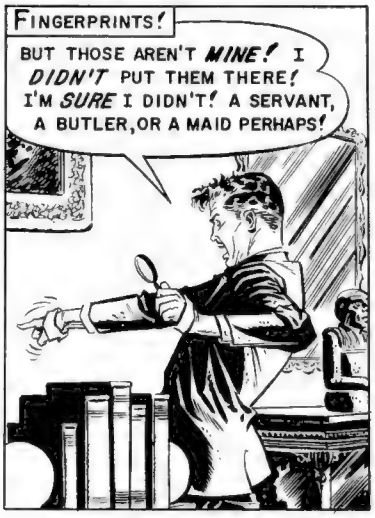
HE PEERED AT HIS HAND AND THE WALLPAPER. HE LOOKED OVER HIS SHOULDER AT THE OTHER ROOM. HIS FACE HARDENED. WITHOUT A WORD, HE BEGAN TO SCRUB THE WALL, UP AND DOWN, BACK AND FORTH, UP AND DOWN, AS HIGH AS HE COULD STRETCH AND AS LOW AS HE COULD BEND...

HE GOT ONE WALL FINISHED, AND THEN... HE CAME TO ANOTHER WALL. HE LOOKED AT THE MANTEL CLOCK. AN HOUR GONE. IT WAS FIVE AFTER ONE. HE TURNED AWAY FROM THIS NEW FRESH WALL...

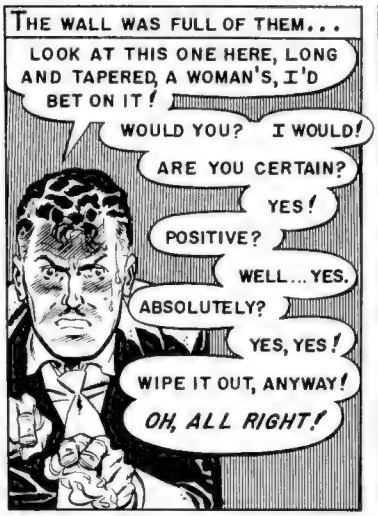
FROM THE CORNERS OF HIS EYES HE SAW THE LITTLE WEBS. WHEN HIS BACK WAS TURNED, THE LITTLE SPIDERS CAME OUT OF THE WOODWORK AND SPUN THEIR LITTLE FRAGILE HALF-INVISIBLE WEBS UPON THE THREE WALLS AS YET UNTOUCHED. EACH TIME HE STARED DIRECTLY AT THEM, THE SPIDERS POPPED BACK INTO THE WOODWORK ONLY TO SPINDLE OUT AS HE RETREATED...

HE WENT TO A WRITING DESK AT WHICH HUXLEY HAD BEEN SEATED EARLIER. HE OPENED A DRAWER AND TOOK OUT WHAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR. A LITTLE MAGNIFYING GLASS HUXLEY SOMETIMES USED FOR READING. HE TOOK THE MAGNIFIER AND APPROACHED THE WALL UNEASILY...

FINGERPRINTS!



THE WALL WAS FULL OF THEM...



IN A RAGE, HE BEGAN TO SWEEP THE WALL UP AND DOWN AND BACK AND FORTH WITH HIS GLOVED HANDS, SWEATING, GRUNTING AND SWEARING, BENDING AND RISING AND GETTING REDDER OF FACE...

HE FINISHED THE WALL AT TWO O'CLOCK. HE TOOK OFF HIS COAT AND PUT IT ON A CHAIR. HE WALKED OVER TO THE BOWL AND TOOK OUT THE WAXED FRUIT AND POLISHED THE ONES AT THE BOTTOM AND POLISHED THE PICTURE FRAME. HE LOOKED UP AT THE CHANDELIER...

HIS FINGERS TWITCHED AT HIS SIDES. HIS MOUTH SLIPPED OPEN AND THE TONGUE MOVED ALONG HIS LIPS AND HE LOOKED AT THE CHANDELIER AND LOOKED AWAY AND LOOKED BACK AT THE CHANDELIER AND LOOKED AT HUXLEY'S BODY AND THEN AT THE CRYSTAL CHANDELIER WITH ITS LONG PEARLS OF RAINBOW GLASS...

HE GOT A CHAIR AND BROUGHT IT OVER UNDER THE CHANDELIER AND PUT ONE FOOT UP ON IT AND TOOK IT DOWN AND THREW THE CHAIR, VIOLENTLY, LAUGHING, INTO A CORNER. THEN HE RAN FROM THE ROOM, LEAVING ONE WALL AS YET UNWASHED...

IN THE DINING ROOM, HE CAME TO A TABLE. HE PAUSED OVER THE TABLE WHERE THE BOXES OF CUTLERY WERE LAID OUT, HEARING ONCE MORE HUXLEY'S VOICE...

NOW ACTON WIPED THE FORKS AND SPOONS AND TOOK DOWN ALL THE PLATES AND SPECIAL CERAMIC DISHES FROM THE WALL SHELF... REMEMBERING ALL THE TOUCHINGS AND GESTURINGS...

PICK IT UP. TURN IT OVER. SEE THE FINE THINNESS OF THE BOWL, THIN AS EGGSHELL. INCREDIBLE. HANDLE IT, GO AHEAD, I DON'T MIND.
HANDLE IT! GO AHEAD! PICK IT UP!

6

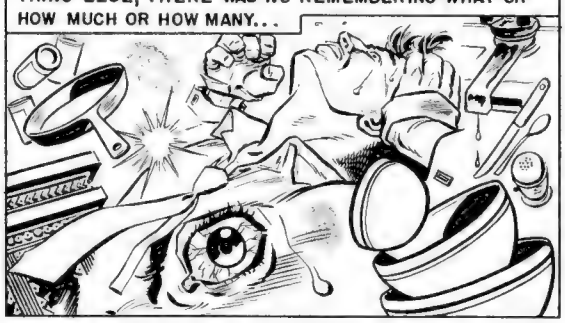
ACTON SOBBED UNEVENLY. HE HURLED THE POTTERY AGAINST THE WALL. IT SHATTERED AND SPREAD, FLAKING WILDLY, UPON THE FLOOR...

AN INSTANT LATER, HE WAS ON HIS KNEES. EVERY PIECE, EVERY SHARD OF IT, MUST BE REGAINED. FOOL, FOOL, FOOL, HE CRIED TO HIMSELF. FIND EVERY PIECE, YOU IDIOT...NOT ONE FRAGMENT OF IT MUST BE LEFT BEHIND. HE GATHERED THEM...

ARE THEY ALL HERE? HE LOOKED UNDER THE TABLE AGAIN AND UNDER THE CHAIRS AND FOUND ONE MORE PIECE BY MATCH-LIGHT AND STARTED TO POLISH EACH LITTLE FRAGMENT AS IF IT WERE A PRECIOUS STONE...

HE TOOK OUT THE LINEN AND WIPED IT AND WIPED THE CHAIRS AND TABLES AND DOORKNOBS AND WINDOW-PANES AND LEDGES AND DRAPES AND WIPED THE FLOOR AND FOUND THE KITCHEN, PANTING, BREATHING VIOLENTLY, AND TOOK OFF HIS VEST AND ADJUSTED HIS GLOVES AND WIPED THE GLITTERING CHROMIUM...

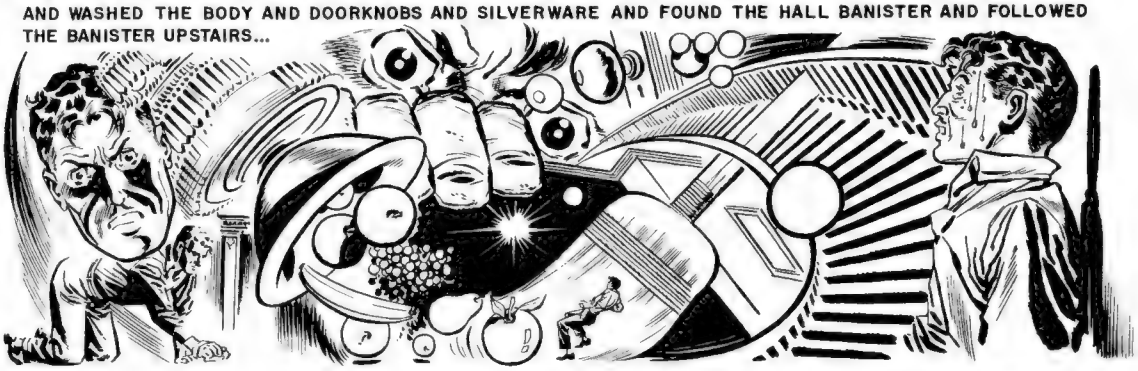
AND HE WIPED ALL THE UTENSILS AND THE SILVER FAUCETS AND THE MIXING BOWLS, FOR NOW HE HAD FORGOTTEN WHAT HE HAD TOUCHED AND WHAT HE HAD NOT. HUXLEY AND HE HAD LINGERED HERE, IN THE KITCHEN, THEY HAD IDLED, TOUCHED THIS, THAT, SOMETHING ELSE, THERE WAS NO REMEMBERING WHAT OR HOW MUCH OR HOW MANY...



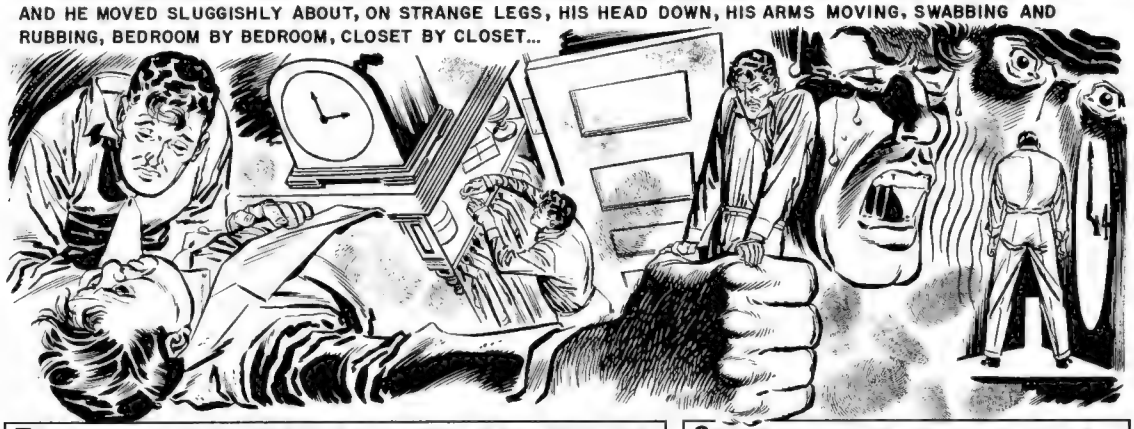
AND HE FINISHED THE KITCHEN AND CAME THROUGH THE HALL INTO THE ROOM WHERE HUXLEY LAY. HE CRIED OUT. HE HAD FORGOTTEN TO WASH THE FOURTH WALL OF THE ROOM. AND WHILE HE WAS GONE, THE LITTLE SPIDERS HAD COME OUT OF THE FOURTH UNWASHED WALL AND SWARMED OVER THE ALREADY CLEAN WALLS, DIRTYING THEM AGAIN! ON THE CEILINGS, THE CHANDELIER, IN THE CORNERS, ON THE FLOOR A MILLION LITTLE WHORLED WEBS HUNG BILLOWING AT HIS SCREAM...

TINY, TINY LITTLE WEBS, NO BIGGER THAN, IRONICALLY, YOUR...FINGER! AS HE WATCHED, THE WEBS WERE WOVEN OVER THE PICTURE FRAME, THE FRUIT BOWL, THE BODY, THE FLOOR. PRINTS WIELDED THE PAPER KNIFE, PULLED OUT DRAWERS, TOUCHED THE TABLE-TOP...TOUCHED, TOUCHED, TOUCHED EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE...

HE POLISHED THE FLOOR WILDLY, WILDLY. HE ROLLED THE BODY OVER AND CRIED ON IT WHILE HE WASHED IT AND GOT UP AND WALKED OVER AND POLISHED THE FRUIT AT THE BOTTOM OF THE BOWL. HE PUT A CHAIR UNDER THE CHANDELIER AND GOT UP AND POLISHED EACH LITTLE HANGING FIRE OF IT, SHAKING IT LIKE A CRYSTAL TAMBOURINE UNTIL IT TILTED BELLWISE IN THE AIR. THEN HE LEAPED OFF THE CHAIR AND GRIPPED THE DOORKNOBS AND GOT UP ON ANOTHER CHAIR AND SWABBED THE WALLS HIGHER AND HIGHER AND RAN TO THE KITCHEN AND GOT A BROOM AND WIPED THE WEBS DOWN FROM THE CEILINGS AND POLISHED THE BOTTOM FRUIT OF THE BOWL AND WASHED THE BODY AND DOORKNOBS AND SILVERWARE AND FOUND THE HALL BANISTER AND FOLLOWED THE BANISTER UPSTAIRS...



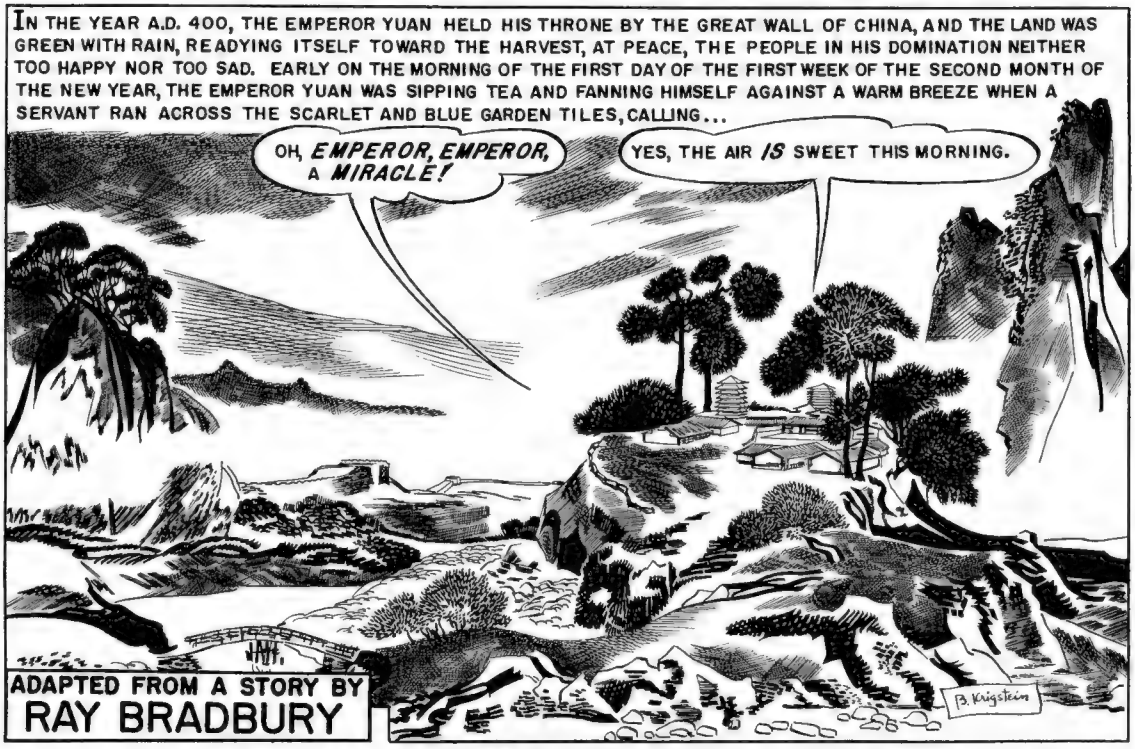
THREE O'CLOCK! THERE WERE TWELVE ROOMS DOWNSTAIRS AND EIGHT ABOVE. ONE HUNDRED CHAIRS, SIX SOFAS, TWENTY-SEVEN TABLES, SIX RADIOS. AND UNDER AND ON TOP AND BEHIND. HE YANKED FURNITURE OUT AWAY FROM WALLS AND, SOBBING, WIPED THEM CLEAN OF YEARS-OLD DUST, HANDLING, ERASING, RUBBING, POLISHING, AND NOW IT WAS FOUR O'CLOCK! AND HIS ARMS ACHED AND HIS EYES WERE SWOLLEN AND STARING AND HE MOVED SLUGGISHLY ABOUT, ON STRANGE LEGS, HIS HEAD DOWN, HIS ARMS MOVING, SWABBING AND RUBBING, BEDROOM BY BEDROOM, CLOSET BY CLOSET...



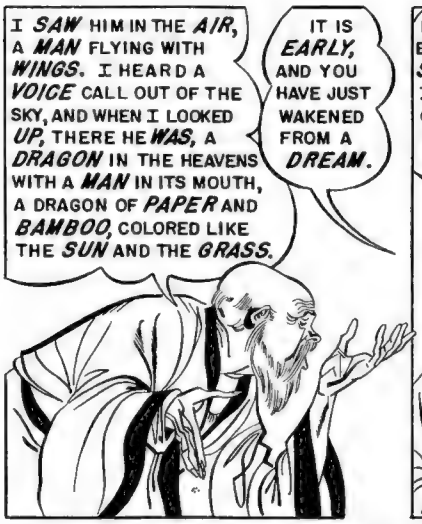
THEY FOUND HIM AT SIX-THIRTY THAT MORNING. IN THE ATTIC. THE ENTIRE HOUSE WAS POLISHED TO A BRILLIANCE. THEY FOUND HIM IN THE ATTIC, POLISHING OLD TRUNKS AND OLD FRAMES AND OLD CHAIRS AND TOYS AND VASES AND ROCKING HORSES AND DUSTY CIVIL WAR COINS. HE WAS HALF THROUGH THE ATTIC WHEN THE POLICE OFFICER WALKED UP BEHIND HIM WITH A GUN...

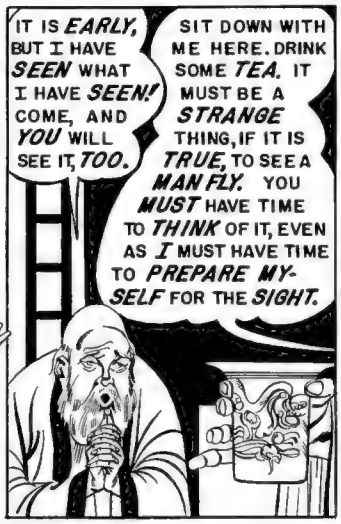
ON THE WAY OUT OF THE HOUSE, ACTON POLISHED THE FRONT DOORKNOB WITH HIS HANDKERCHIEF, AND SLAMMED IT IN TRIUMPH!

The FLYING MACHINE


IN THE YEAR A.D. 400, THE EMPEROR YUAN HELD HIS THRONE BY THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA, AND THE LAND WAS GREEN WITH RAIN, READYING ITSELF TOWARD THE HARVEST, AT PEACE, THE PEOPLE IN HIS DOMINATION NEITHER TOO HAPPY NOR TOO SAD. EARLY ON THE MORNING OF THE FIRST DAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF THE SECOND MONTH OF THE NEW YEAR, THE EMPEROR YUAN WAS SIPPING TEA AND FANNING HIMSELF AGAINST A WARM BREEZE WHEN A SERVANT RAN ACROSS THE SCARLET AND BLUE GARDEN TILES, CALLING...
OH, EMPEROR, EMPEROR, A MIRACLE!
YES, THE AIR IS SWEET THIS MORNING.
ADAPTED FROM A STORY BY
RAY BRADBURY
B. Krigstein

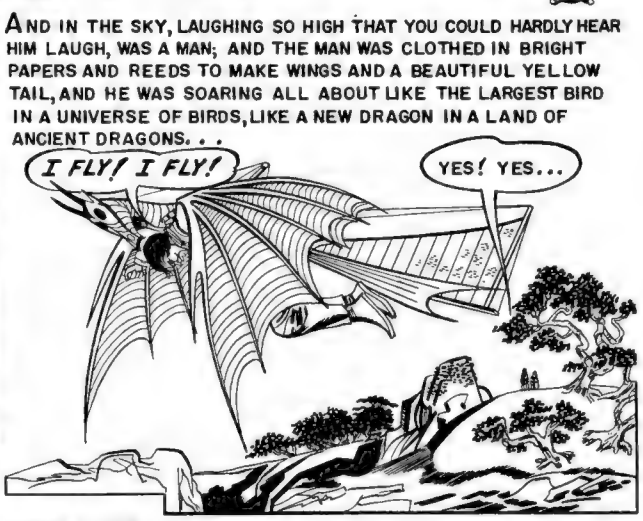
NO, NO, YOUR EXCELLENCY.
LET ME GUESS, THEN. ER... THE SUN HAS RISEN AND A NEW DAY IS UPON US. OR THE SEA IS BLUE. THAT, NOW, IS THE FINEST OF ALL MIRACLES.

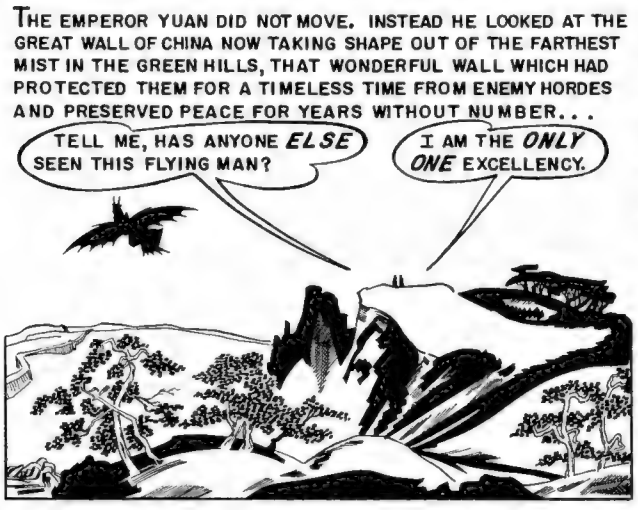

I SAW HIM IN THE AIR, A MAN FLYING WITH WINGS. I HEARD A VOICE CALL OUT OF THE SKY, AND WHEN I LOOKED UP, THERE HE WAS, A DRAGON IN THE HEAVENS WITH A MAN IN ITS MOUTH, A DRAGON OF PAPER AND BAMBOO, COLORED LIKE THE SUN AND THE GRASS.
IT IS EARLY, AND YOU HAVE JUST WAKENED FROM A DREAM.


IT IS EARLY, BUT I HAVE SEEN WHAT I HAVE SEEN! COME, AND YOU WILL SEE IT, TOO.
SIT DOWN WITH ME HERE. DRINK SOME TEA. IT MUST BE A STRANGE THING, IF IT IS TRUE, TO SEE A MAN FLY. YOU MUST HAVE TIME TO THINK OF IT, EVEN AS I MUST HAVE TIME TO PREPARE MYSELF FOR THE SIGHT.

THEY DRANK TEA. THE EMPEROR ROSE THOUGHTFULLY AS THE SERVANT PLEADED...
PLEASE. OR HE WILL BE GONE.
NOW YOU MAY SHOW ME WHAT YOU HAVE SEEN.

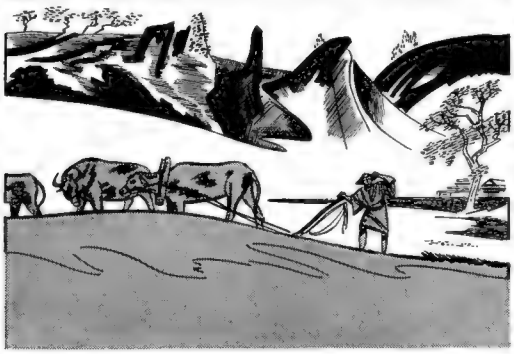
THEY WALKED INTO A GARDEN, ACROSS A MEADOW OF GRASS, OVER A SMALL BRIDGE, THROUGH A GROVE OF TREES, AND UP A TINY HILL...
THERE!
THE EMPEROR LOOKED INTO THE SKY...


AND IN THE SKY, LAUGHING SO HIGH THAT YOU COULD HARDLY HEAR HIM LAUGH, WAS A MAN; AND THE MAN WAS CLOTHED IN BRIGHT PAPERS AND REEDS TO MAKE WINGS AND A BEAUTIFUL YELLOW TAIL, AND HE WAS SOARING ALL ABOUT LIKE THE LARGEST BIRD IN A UNIVERSE OF BIRDS, LIKE A NEW DRAGON IN A LAND OF ANCIENT DRAGONS...
I FLY! I FLY!
YES! YES...


THE EMPEROR YUAN DID NOT MOVE. INSTEAD HE LOOKED AT THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA NOW TAKING SHAPE OUT OF THE FARTHEST MIST IN THE GREEN HILLS, THAT WONDERFUL WALL WHICH HAD PROTECTED THEM FOR A TIMELESS TIME FROM ENEMY HORDES AND PRESERVED PEACE FOR YEARS WITHOUT NUMBER...
TELL ME, HAS ANYONE ELSE SEEN THIS FLYING MAN?
I AM THE ONLY ONE EXCELLENCY.

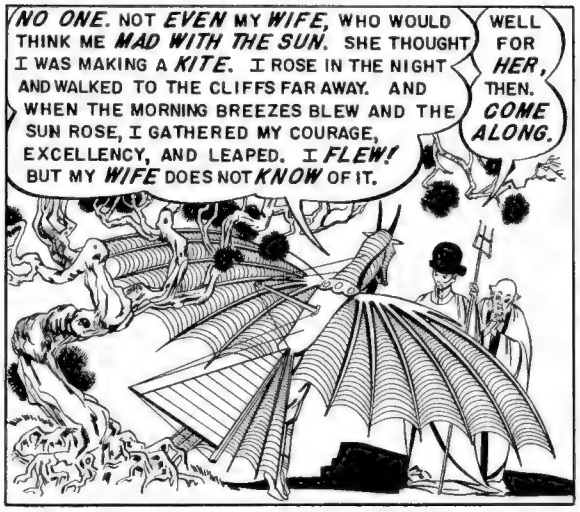
THE EMPEROR WATCHED THE HEAVENS ANOTHER MINUTE AND THEN SAID...
CALL HIM DOWN TO ME.
HO, COME DOWN, COME DOWN! THE EMPEROR WISHES TO SEE YOU!
2

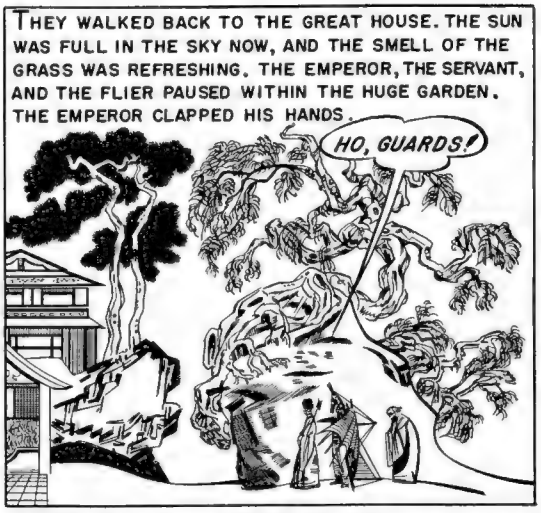
THE EMPEROR GLANCED IN ALL DIRECTIONS WHILE THE FLYING MAN SOARED DOWN THE MORNING WIND. HE SAW A FARMER, EARLY IN HIS FIELDS, WATCHING THE SKY, AND HE NOTED WHERE THE FARMER STOOD...



THE FLYING MAN ALIT WITH A RUSTLE OF PAPER AND A CREAK OF BAMBOO REEDS. HE CAME PROUDLY TO THE EMPEROR, CLUMSY IN HIS RIG, AT LAST BOWING BEFORE THE OLD MAN...

THE EMPEROR REACHED OUT A THIN HAND TO TOUCH THE PRETTY PAPER AND THE BIRDLIKE KEEL OF THE APPARATUS. IT SMELLED COOL, OF THE WIND...


NO ONE. NOT EVEN MY WIFE, WHO WOULD THINK ME MAD WITH THE SUN. SHE THOUGHT I WAS MAKING A KITE. I ROSE IN THE NIGHT AND WALKED TO THE CLIFFS FAR AWAY. AND WHEN THE MORNING BREEZES BLEW AND THE SUN ROSE, I GATHERED MY COURAGE, EXCELLENCY, AND LEAPED. I FLEW! BUT MY WIFE DOES NOT KNOW OF IT.
WELL FOR HER, THEN. COME ALONG.

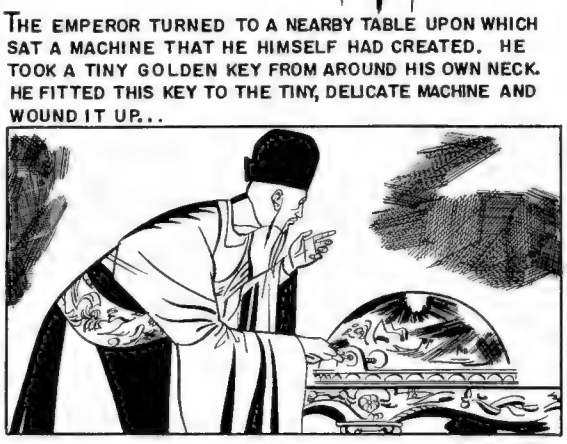

THEY WALKED BACK TO THE GREAT HOUSE. THE SUN WAS FULL IN THE SKY NOW, AND THE SMELL OF THE GRASS WAS REFRESHING. THE EMPEROR, THE SERVANT, AND THE FLIER PAUSED WITHIN THE HUGE GARDEN. THE EMPEROR CLAPPED HIS HANDS.
HO, GUARDS!

THE GUARDS CAME RUNNING...
HOLD THIS MAN.

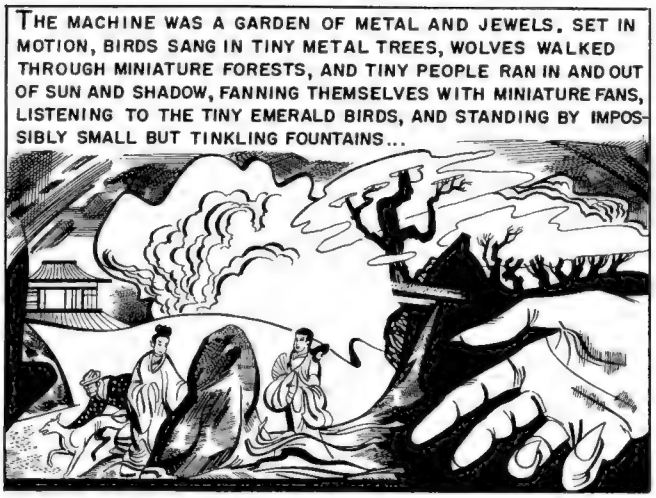
THE GUARDS SEIZED THE FLIER...
CALL THE EXECUTIONER!
WHAT'S THIS? WHAT HAVE I DONE?
THE FLIER BEGAN TO WEEP, SO THAT THE BEAUTIFUL PAPER APPARATUS RUSTLED...

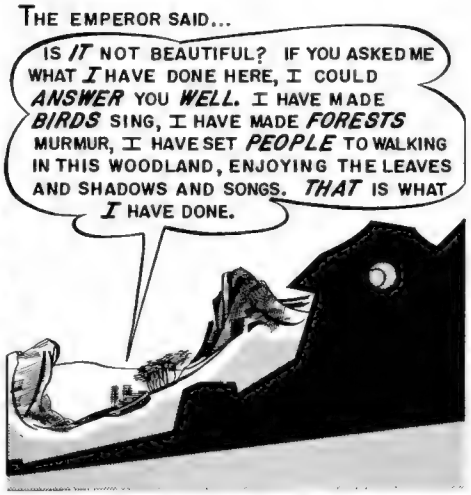
HERE IS A MAN WHO HAS MADE A CERTAIN MACHINE, AND YET HE ASKS US WHAT HE HAS CREATED. HE DOES NOT KNOW HIMSELF. IT IS ONLY NECESSARY THAT HE CREATE, WITHOUT KNOWING WHY HE HAS DONE SO, OR WHAT THIS THING WILL DO.

THE EXECUTIONER CAME RUNNING WITH A SILVER AX. HE STOOD WITH HIS NAKED, LARGE-MUSCLED ARMS READY, HIS FACE COVERED WITH A SERENE WHITE MASK...
ONE MOMENT...

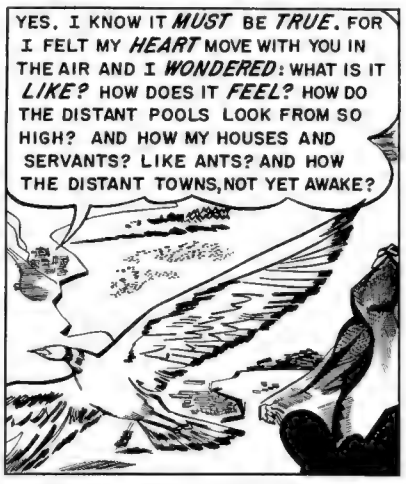

THE EMPEROR TURNED TO A NEARBY TABLE UPON WHICH SAT A MACHINE THAT HE HIMSELF HAD CREATED. HE TOOK A TINY GOLDEN KEY FROM AROUND HIS OWN NECK. HE FITTED THIS KEY TO THE TINY, DELICATE MACHINE AND WOUND IT UP...
THEN HE SET THE MACHINE GOING...

4

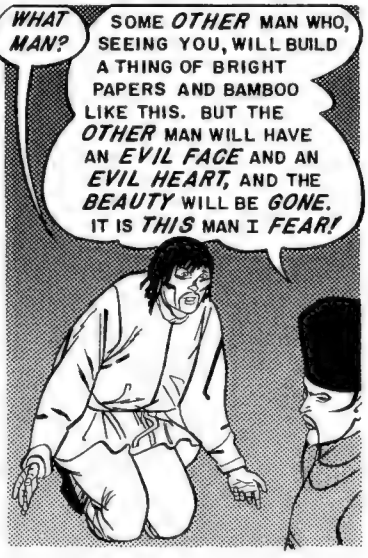

THE MACHINE WAS A GARDEN OF METAL AND JEWELS, SET IN MOTION, BIRDS SANG IN TINY METAL TREES, WOLVES WALKED THROUGH MINIATURE FORESTS, AND TINY PEOPLE RAN IN AND OUT OF SUN AND SHADOW, FANNING THEMSELVES WITH MINIATURE FANS, LISTENING TO THE TINY EMERALD BIRDS, AND STANDING BY IMPOSSIBLY SMALL BUT TINKLING FOUNTAINS...


THE EMPEROR SAID...
IS *IT* NOT BEAUTIFUL? IF YOU ASKED ME WHAT *I* HAVE DONE HERE, I COULD *ANSWER* YOU *WELL*. I HAVE MADE *BIRDS* SING, I HAVE MADE *FORESTS* MURMUR, I HAVE SET *PEOPLE* TO WALKING IN THIS WOODLAND, ENJOYING THE LEAVES AND SHADOWS AND SONGS. *THAT* IS WHAT *I* HAVE DONE.

THE FLIER, ON HIS KNEES, THE TEARS POURING DOWN HIS FACE, PLEADED..
BUT *I* HAVE DONE A *SIMILAR* THING! I HAVE FOUND *BEAUTY*. I HAVE *FLOWN* ON THE *MORNING WIND*. I HAVE LOOKED DOWN ON ALL THE SLEEPING HOUSES AND GARDENS. I HAVE SMELLED THE SEA AND EVEN *SEEN* IT, BEYOND THE HILLS, FROM MY HIGH PLACE. AND I HAVE SOARED LIKE A BIRD. OH, I CANNOT *SAY* HOW BEAUTIFUL IT IS UP THERE, IN THE SKY, WITH THE WIND ABOUT ME, BLOWING ME LIKE A FEATHER. *THAT* IS *BEAUTIFUL*, EMPEROR, THAT IS *BEAUTIFUL*, *TOO!*


YES. I KNOW IT *MUST* BE *TRUE*. FOR I FELT MY *HEART* MOVE WITH YOU IN THE AIR AND I *WONDERED*: WHAT IS IT *LIKE*? HOW DOES IT *FEEL*? HOW DO THE DISTANT POOLS LOOK FROM SO HIGH? AND HOW MY HOUSES AND SERVANTS? LIKE ANTS? AND HOW THE DISTANT TOWNS, NOT YET AWAKE?

THEN *SPARE ME!*
BUT THERE ARE TIMES WHEN ONE MUST *LOSE* A LITTLE BEAUTY IF ONE IS TO *KEEP* WHAT LITTLE BEAUTY ONE *ALREADY* HAS. I DO NOT FEAR *YOU, YOURSELF*, BUT I FEAR *ANOTHER MAN*.


WHAT MAN?
SOME *OTHER* MAN WHO, SEEING YOU, WILL BUILD A THING OF BRIGHT PAPERS AND BAMBOO LIKE THIS. BUT THE *OTHER* MAN WILL HAVE AN *EVIL FACE* AND AN *EVIL HEART*, AND THE *BEAUTY* WILL BE *GONE*. IT IS *THIS* MAN I *FEAR!*

WHY? WHY?
WHO IS TO SAY THAT SOMEDAY *JUST* SUCH A MAN, IN *JUST* SUCH AN APPARATUS, MIGHT NOT *FLY IN THE SKY AND DROP HUGE STONES UPON THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA?*
5

NO ONE MOVED OR SAID A WORD...
OFF WITH HIS HEAD!
THE EXECUTIONER WHIRLED HIS SILVER AX...
BURN THE KITE AND THE INVENTOR'S BODY AND BURY THEIR ASHES TOGETHER...
THE GUARDS RETREATED TO OBEY...
THE EMPEROR TURNED TO HIS SERVANT WHO HAD SEEN THE MAN FLYING...
HOLD YOUR TONGUE. IT WAS ALL A DREAM, A MOST SORROWFUL AND BEAUTIFUL DREAM. AND THAT FARMER IN THE DISTANT FIELD WHO ALSO SAW, TELL HIM IT WOULD PAY HIM TO CONSIDER IT ONLY A VISION. IF EVER THE WORD PASSES AROUND, YOU AND THE FARMER DIE WITHIN THE HOUR.
YOU ARE MERCIFUL EMPEROR.
THE OLD MAN SAW, BEYOND THE GARDEN WALL, THE GUARDS BURNING THE BEAUTIFUL MACHINE OF PAPER AND REEDS THAT SMELLED OF MORNING WIND. HE SAW THE DARK SMOKE CLIMB INTO THE SKY...
NO, NOT MERCIFUL. NO, ONLY VERY MUCH BEWILDERED AND AFRAID.
HE SAW THE GUARDS DIGGING A TINY PIT WHEREIN TO BURY THE ASHES...
WHAT IS THE LIFE OF ONE MAN AGAINST A MILLION OTHERS? I MUST TAKE SOLACE FROM THAT THOUGHT.
HE TOOK THE KEY FROM ITS CHAIN ABOUT HIS NECK AND ONCE MORE WOUND UP THE BEAUTIFUL MINATURE GARDEN. THE TINY GARDEN WHIRRED ITS HIDDEN AND DELICATE MACHINERY AND SET ITSELF INTO MOTION; TINY PEOPLE WALKED IN FORESTS, TINY FOXES LOPED THROUGH SUN-SPECKLED GLADES, AND AMONG THE TINY TREES FLEW LITTLE BITS OF HIGH SONG AND BRIGHT BLUE AND YELLOW COLOR, FLYING, FLYING, FLYING IN THAT SMALL SKY. AND THE EMPEROR SAID, CLOSING HIS EYES...
OH, LOOK AT THE BIRDS, LOOK AT THE BIRDS!
THE END

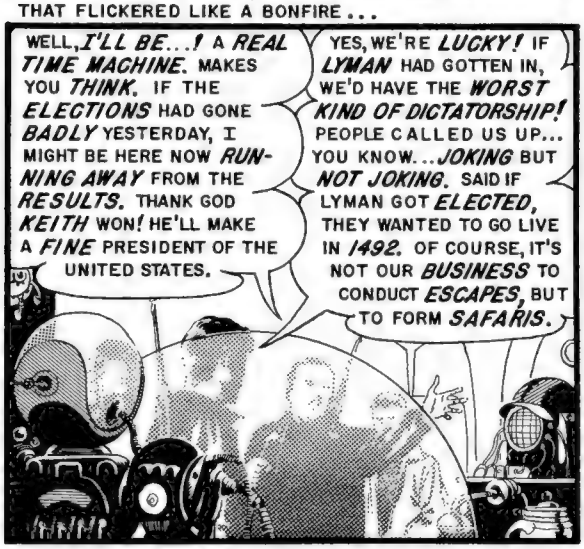
A SOUND of THUNDER

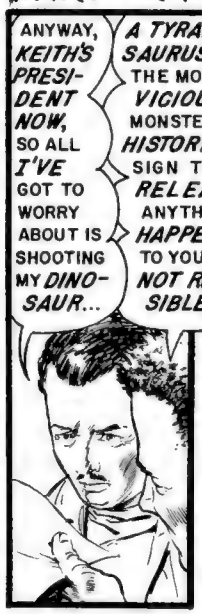
MR. ECKLES READ THE SIGN ON THE OFFICE WALL, SMILED NERVOUSLY, AND HANDED A CHECK FOR TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS TO THE MAN BEHIND THE DESK...

DOES THIS SAFARI GUARANTEE I COME BACK *ALIVE?*
WE GUARANTEE *NOTHING*...EXCEPT THE *DINOSAURS*. THIS IS MR. TRAVIS, YOUR SAFARI GUIDE IN THE PAST. HE'LL TELL YOU *WHAT* AND *WHERE* TO *SHOOT*. IF HE SAYS *NO SHOOTING*...*NO SHOOTING!* IF YOU *DON'T* FOLLOW DIRECTIONS, THERE'S A *STIFF PENALTY*...
TIME SAFARI, INC.
SAFARIS TO ANY YEAR IN THE PAST
YOU NAME THE ANIMAL
WE TAKE YOU THERE
YOU SHOOT IT
AL WILLIAMSON 54

ADAPTED FROM A STORY BY
RAY BRADBURY

ECKLES LOOKED ACROSS THE VAST OFFICE AT AN ARRANGEMENT OF WIRES, GOLDEN BOXES AND AN AURORA THAT FLICKERED LIKE A BONFIRE...


WELL, *I'LL BE*...! A *REAL TIME MACHINE*. MAKES YOU *THINK*. IF THE *ELECTIONS* HAD GONE *BADLY* YESTERDAY, I MIGHT BE HERE NOW *RUNNING AWAY* FROM THE *RESULTS*. THANK GOD *KEITH* WON! HE'LL MAKE A *FINE* PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.
YES, WE'RE *LUCKY!* IF *LYMAN* HAD GOTTEN IN, WE'D HAVE THE *WORST KIND OF DICTATORSHIP!* PEOPLE CALLED US UP... YOU KNOW...*JOKING* BUT *NOT JOKING*. SAID IF LYMAN GOT *ELECTED*, THEY WANTED TO GO LIVE IN *1492*. OF COURSE, IT'S NOT OUR *BUSINESS* TO CONDUCT *ESCAPES*, BUT TO FORM *SAFARIS*.


ANYWAY, *KEITH'S PRESIDENT NOW*, SO ALL *I'VE* GOT TO WORRY ABOUT IS SHOOTING MY *DINOSAUR*...
A TYRANNOSAURUS REX. THE MOST *VICIOUS* MONSTER IN *HISTORY!* SIGN THIS *RELEASE*. ANYTHING *HAPPENS* TO YOU, WE'RE *NOT RESPONSIBLE*.

TRYING TO *SCARE* ME!?
FRANKLY, *YES*. WE DON'T *WANT* ANYONE GOING WHO'LL *PANIC* AT THE FIRST SHOT. WE'RE TAKING YOU BACK *SIXTY MILLION YEARS* TO BAG THE *BIGGEST GAME* IN ALL TIME. IT'S THE GREATEST THRILL A *REAL* HUNTER COULD *ASK* FOR. CARE TO *TAKE BACK* YOUR *CHECK?*
1

MR. ECKLES LOOKED AT THE CHECK FOR A LONG TIME. HIS FINGERS TWITCHED...

GOOD LUCK! MR. TRAVIS! THEY'RE ALL YOURS!

FOLLOW ME... ALL OF YOU...

THEY MOVED SILENTLY ACROSS THE ROOM, TAKING THEIR GUNS WITH THEM, TOWARD THE MACHINE, TOWARD THE SILVER METAL AND THE ROARING LIGHT...

FIRST A DAY AND THEN A NIGHT AND THEN IT WAS DAY-NIGHT-DAY-NIGHT... A WEEK... A MONTH... A YEAR... A DECADE. 2056 A.D., 2019 A.D., 1999, 1954, GONE! THE MACHINE ROARED...

ECKLES SWAYED ON THE PADDED SEAT, HIS FACE PALE, HIS JAW STIFF. THERE WERE FOUR OTHER MEN IN THE MACHINE: TRAVIS, THE SAFARI LEADER; LESPER, HIS ASSISTANT; AND TWO OTHER HUNTERS, BILLINGS AND KRAMER. THEY SAT LOOKING AT EACH OTHER AND THE YEARS BLAZED AROUND THEM. TIME WAS A FILM RUN BACKWARDS. SUNS FLED AND TEN MILLION MOONS FLED AFTER THEM. THE MACHINE HOWLED...

GOOD GOD! EVERY HUNTER THAT EVER *LIVED* WOULD ENVY US TODAY. THIS MAKES *AFRICA* SEEM LIKE *ILLINOIS.*

THE MACHINE SLOWED. ITS SCREAM FELL TO A MURMUR. THE MACHINE STOPPED. THE SUN STOPPED IN THE SKY. THE FOG THAT HAD ENVELOPED THE MACHINE BLEW AWAY, AND THEY WERE IN AN OLD TIME, A VERY OLD TIME INDEED. TRAVIS POINTED...

THAT IS THE JUNGLE OF SIXTY-TWO MILLION TWO THOUSAND AND FIFTY-FIVE YEARS BEFORE PRESIDENT KEITH. AND THAT IS THE *PATH*, LAID DOWN BY 'TIME SAFARI' FOR *YOUR USE.* IT'S AN *ANTI-GRAVITY METAL.* IT *FLOATS... SIX INCHES ABOVE THE EARTH.*

IT DOESN'T *TOUCH* SO MUCH AS *ONE GRASS BLADE*, OR *FLOWER*, OR *TREE.* ITS PURPOSE IS TO KEEP *YOU* FROM TOUCHING THIS WORLD OF THE PAST IN *ANY WAY. STAY ON THE PATH! DON'T GO OFF IT! I REPEAT: DON'T GO OFF IT... FOR ANY REASON! AND DON'T SHOOT ANY ANIMAL WE DON'T OKAY!*

WHY?

THEY SAT IN THE ANCIENT WILDERNESS. FAR BIRDS' CRIES BLEW ON A WIND, AND THE SMELL OF TAR AND AN OLD SALT SEA, MOIST GRASSES AND FLOWERS THE COLOR OF BLOOD...

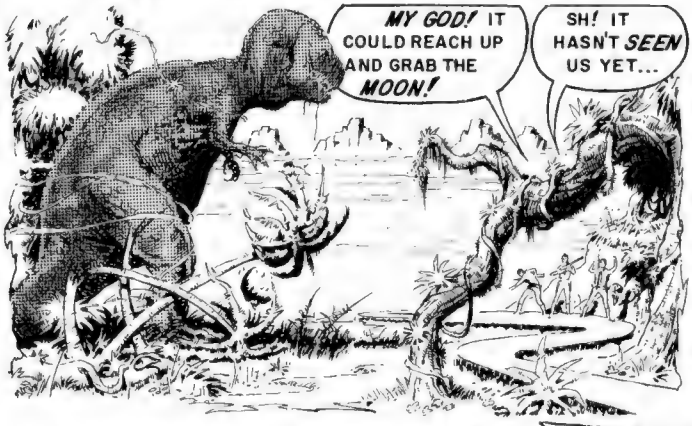
WE *DON'T* WANT TO *CHANGE* THE *FUTURE.* WE DON'T *BELONG* HERE. A *TIME MACHINE* IS A *FINICKY BUSINESS.* NOT *KNOWING* IT, WE MIGHT KILL AN *IMPORTANT ANIMAL*, A *SMALL BIRD*, A *ROACH*, A *FLOWER*, THUS DESTROYING AN *IMPORTANT LINK* IN A *GROWING SPECIES.*

THAT'S NOT *CLEAR!*

2

TRAVIS CONTINUED...
ALL RIGHT, SAY WE ACCIDENTALLY KILLED ONE MOUSE HERE. THAT MEANS ALL THE FUTURE FAMILIES OF THIS ONE PARTICULAR MOUSE WOULD BE DESTROYED. RIGHT?
RIGHT!
AND ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE FAMILIES OF THAT ONE MOUSE! WITH A STAMP OF YOUR FOOT, YOU ANNIHILATE FIRST ONE, THEN A DOZEN, THEN A THOUSAND, A MILLION, A BILLION POSSIBLE MICE!
SO THEY'RE DEAD! SO WHAT?
WHAT ABOUT THE FOXES THAT'LL NEED THOSE MICE TO SURVIVE? FOR WANT OF TEN MICE, A FOX DIES! FOR WANT OF A FOX, ALL MANNER OF LIFE FORMS ARE THROWN INTO CHAOS AND DESTRUCTION. SIXTY MILLION YEARS LATER, A CAVE MAN GOES HUNTING.
BUT YOU, FRIEND, HAVE STEPPED ON ALL THE SABER-TOOTHED TIGERS IN THAT REGION BY STEPPING ON ONE SINGLE MOUSE. SO THE CAVE MAN STARVES. DESTROY THIS ONE MAN AND YOU DESTROY HIS FUTURE SONS AND THEIR SONS... A RACE ... A PEOPLE... A HISTORY. ROME NEVER RISES. EUROPE REMAINS A DARK FOREST. THERE MIGHT NEVER BE A UNITED STATES! SO BE CAREFUL. STAY ON THE PATH...
THE JUNGLE WAS HIGH AND THE JUNGLE WAS BROAD AND THE JUNGLE WAS THE ENTIRE WORLD FOREVER AND EVER. SOUNDS LIKE MUSIC AND SOUNDS LIKE FLYING TENTS FILLED THE SKY, AND THOSE WERE PTERODACTYLS FLYING WITH CAVERNOUS GREY WINGS, GIGANTIC BATS OUT OF A DELIRIUM AND A NIGHT FEVER. ECKLES AIMED HIS RIFLE PLAYFULLY...
FORBIDDEN! DON'T EVEN AIM FOR FUN! IF YOUR GUN SHOULD GO OFF...
WHERE'S OUR TYRANNOSAURUS?
LESPER CHECKED HIS WRIST WATCH...
UP AHEAD! WE'LL BISECT HIS TRAIL IN SIXTY SECONDS. DON'T SHOOT TILL WE GIVE THE WORD. AND, FOR GOD'S SAKE, STAY ON THE PATH!
THEY MOVED FORWARD IN THE WIND OF MORNING. ECKLES MURMURED...
STRANGE. UP AHEAD, SIXTY MILLION YEARS, ELECTION DAY IS OVER. KEITH MADE PRESIDENT. EVERYONE'S CELEBRATING. AND HERE WE ARE, A MILLION YEARS LOST, AND THEY DON'T EXIST. THE THINGS WE WORRY ABOUT NOT EVEN BORN OR THOUGHT ABOUT YET...
TRAVIS WHISPERED...
SAFETY CATCHES OFF, EVERYONE. YOU, FIRST SHOT, ECKLES. SECOND, BILLINGS. THIRD, KRAMER.
I'VE HUNTED WILD BOAR, TIGER, BUFFALO, ELEPHANT... BUT THIS IS IT. I'M SHAKING LIKE A KID!
THE JUNGLE WAS WIDE AND FULL OF TWITTERING, RUSTLING SIGNS. SUDDENLY IT ALL CEASED, AS IF SOMEONE HAD SHUT A DOOR. SILENCE. THEN... A SOUND OF THUNDER...
GREAT GOD!
SH!
OUT OF THE MIST CAME TYRANNOSAURUS REX...
3

IT CAME ON GREAT, OILED, RESILIENT, STRIDING LEGS. IT TOWERED TWENTY FEET ABOVE TREES, A HUGE EVIL GOD, FOLDING ITS DELICATE WATCHMAKER'S CLAWS TO ITS OILY, REPTILIAN CHEST. EACH LOWER LEG WAS A PISTON, A THOUSAND POUNDS OF WHITE BONE SUNK IN THICK ROPES OF MUSCLE, SHEATHED OVER IN A GLEAM OF PEBBLED SKIN. EACH THIGH WAS A TON OF MEAT, IVORY AND STEEL MESH. AND FROM THE UPPER BODY THOSE TWO DELICATE ARMS DANGLED, ARMS WITH HANDS THAT MIGHT PICK UP AND EXAMINE MEN LIKE TOYS...



THE HEAD, A TON OF SCULPTURED STONE, LIFTED EASILY UPON THE SKY. ITS MOUTH GAPED, EXPOSING A FENCE OF TEETH LIKE DAGGERS. ITS EYES ROLLED, EMPTY OF ALL EXPRESSION SAVE HUNGER. IT RAN, ITS PELVIC BONES CRUSHING ASIDE TREES, ITS TALONED FEET CLAWING DAMP EARTH WITH A GLIDING BALLET STEP FAR TOO POISED AND BALANCED FOR ITS TEN TONS...

THE TYRANNOSAURUS RAISED ITSELF, ITS ARMORED FLESH CRUSTED WITH SLIME. AND IN THE SLIME, TINY INSECTS WRIGGLED, SO THAT THE ENTIRE BODY SEEMED TO TWITCH AND UNDULATE. IT EXHALED AND A STINK OF RAW FLESH BLEW DOWN THE WILDERNESS...

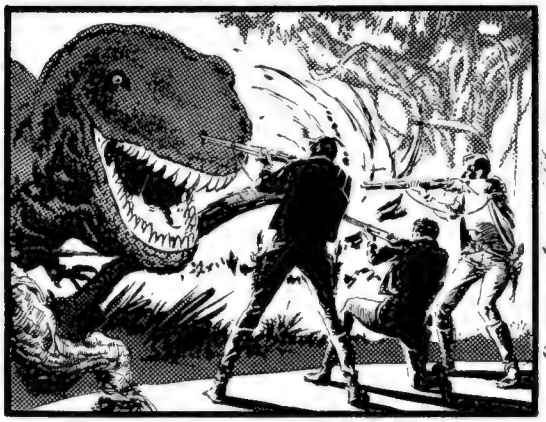
ECKLES MADE A SERIES OF GRUNTING SOUNDS, AS IF HE'D BEEN HIT, VERY HARD, IN THE STOMACH. HE STARTED OUT... TOOK A FEW STEPS... BLINKING... SHUFFLING...

THE MONSTER, AT THE FIRST MOTION, STARTED FORWARD WITH A TERRIBLE SCREAM. THE RIFLES JERKED UP AND BLAZED. A WINDSTORM FROM THE BEAST'S MOUTH ENGULFED THEM IN A STENCH OF SLIME AND OLD BLOOD...

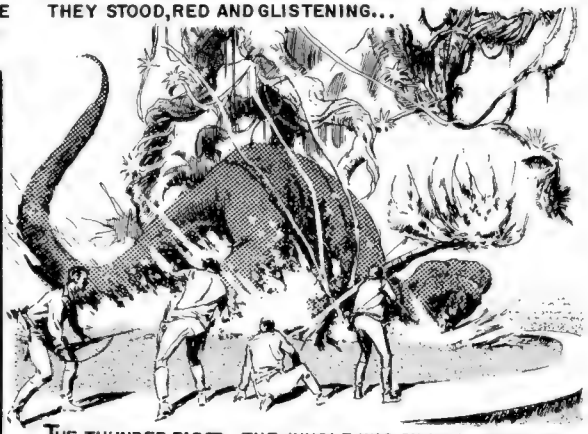
ECKLES STUMBLED BLINDLY TO THE EDGE OF THE PATH, HIS GUN LIMP IN HIS ARMS, AND STEPPED OFF...

HIS FEET SANK INTO GREEN MOSS...

THE RIFLES CRACKED AGAIN. THEIR SOUND WAS LOST IN SHRIEK AND LIZARD THUNDER. THE MONSTER TWITCHED ITS JEWELER'S HANDS DOWN TO FONDLE THE MEN, TO TWIST THEM IN HALF, TO CRUSH THEM LIKE BERRIES, TO CRAM THEM INTO ITS TEETH AND ITS SCREAMING THROAT. ITS BOULDER-STONE EYES LEVELED WITH THE MEN. THEY SAW THEMSELVES MIRRORED, FIRED AT THE METALLIC EYELIDS, THE BLAZING BLACK IRIS . . .



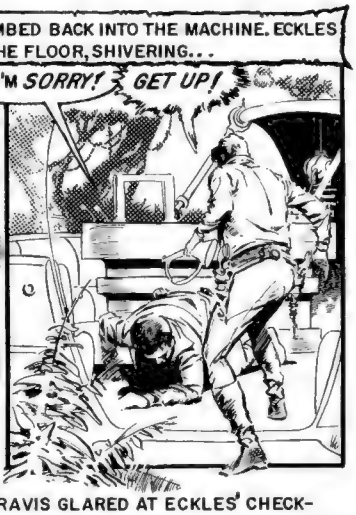
LIKE A STONE IDOL, LIKE A MOUNTAIN AVALANCHE, TYRANNOSAURUS FELL. THUNDERING, IT CLUTCHED TREES, PULLED THEM WITH IT. A FOUNTAIN OF BLOOD SPURTED FROM ITS THROAT. SOMEWHERE INSIDE, A SAC OF FLUIDS BURST. SICKENING GUSHES DRENCHED THE HUNTERS. THEY STOOD, RED AND GLISTENING...



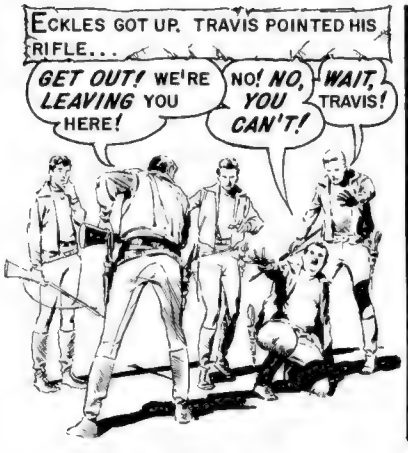
THE THUNDER FADED. THE JUNGLE WAS SILENT. AFTER THE AVALANCHE, GREEN PEACE. AFTER THE NIGHTMARE, MORNING.

THE MONSTER LAY, A HILL OF SOLID FLESH. WITHIN, YOU COULD HEAR THE SIGHS AND MURMURS AS ITS FURTHEST CHAMBERS DIED, THE ORGANS MALFUNCTIONING, THE LIQUIDS RUNNING, EVERYTHING SHUTTING OFF, CLOSING UP FOREVER. THE TONNAGE OF ITS OWN DEAD WEIGHT SNAPPED THE DELICATE FOREARMS CAUGHT UNDERNEATH. ANOTHER CRACKING SOUND. OVERHEAD, A HUGE TREE BRANCH BROKE FROM ITS MOORING AND FELL. IT CRASHED UPON THE DEAD BEAST WITH FINALITY...

THEY CLIMBED BACK INTO THE MACHINE. ECKLES LAY ON THE FLOOR, SHIVERING...

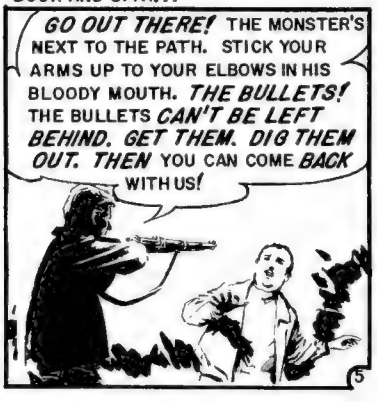


ECKLES GOT UP. TRAVIS POINTED HIS RIFLE...



YOU STAY OUT OF THIS, LESPER! THIS STUPID FOOL NEARLY KILLED US, BUT IT ISN'T THAT! NO! IT'S HIS SHOES! LOOK AT THEM. HE STEPPED OFF THE PATH. GOD KNOWS WHAT HE'S DONE TO TIME AND HISTORY!
I'LL PAY! I'LL PAY ANYTHING! PLEASE LET ME GO BACK WITH YOU!

TRAVIS GLARED AT ECKLES' CHECKBOOK AND SPAT...


GO OUT THERE! THE MONSTER'S NEXT TO THE PATH. STICK YOUR ARMS UP TO YOUR ELBOWS IN HIS BLOODY MOUTH. THE BULLETS! THE BULLETS CAN'T BE LEFT BEHIND. GET THEM. DIG THEM OUT. THEN YOU CAN COME BACK WITH US!

THE JUNGLE WAS ALIVE AGAIN, FULL OF THE OLD TREMORS AND BIRD CRIES. ECKLES TURNED SLOWLY TO STARE AT THE PRIMEVAL GARBAGE DUMP, THAT HILL OF NIGHTMARES AND TERRORS WHERE EVEN NOW STRANGE REPTILIAN BIRDS AND GOLDEN INSECTS WERE BUSY AT THE STEAMING ARMOR. AFTER A LONG TIME, LIKE A SLEEPWALKER, ECKLES SHUFFLED OUT ALONG THE PATH...

HE RETURNED SHUDDERING, FIVE MINUTES LATER, HIS ARMS SOAKED AND RED TO THE ELBOWS. HE HELD OUT HIS HANDS. EACH HELD A NUMBER OF STEEL BULLETS. THEN HE FELL. HE LAY, NOT MOVING...

YOU DIDN'T *HAVE* TO *MAKE* HIM DO *THAT*, TRAVIS!

DIDN'T I? IT'S *TOO EARLY* TO *TELL!* HE'LL LIVE! NEXT TIME, HE WON'T GO *HUNTING* GAME LIKE *THIS*. OKAY! SWITCH ON. LET'S GO HOME...

1492...1776...1812. ECKLES WAS UP AND AROUND, NOT SPEAKING. TRAVIS GLARED AT HIM...

DON'T *LOOK* AT ME! I DIDN'T *DO* ANYTHING!

WHO CAN *TELL?*

I JUST STEPPED OFF THE PATH, THAT'S ALL. GOT A LITTLE *MUD* ON MY SHOES! WHAT DO YOU *WANT* ME TO DO, GET DOWN AND *PRAY?*

WE MIGHT *NEED* IT! I'M *WARNING* YOU, ECKLES, I MIGHT *KILL* YOU YET. I'VE GOT MY *GUN* READY!

I'M INNOCENT! I HAVEN'T *DONE* ANYTHING! JUST STEPPED INTO A LITTLE *MUD. THAT'S ALL...*

1954...2000...2056. THE MACHINE STOPPED...

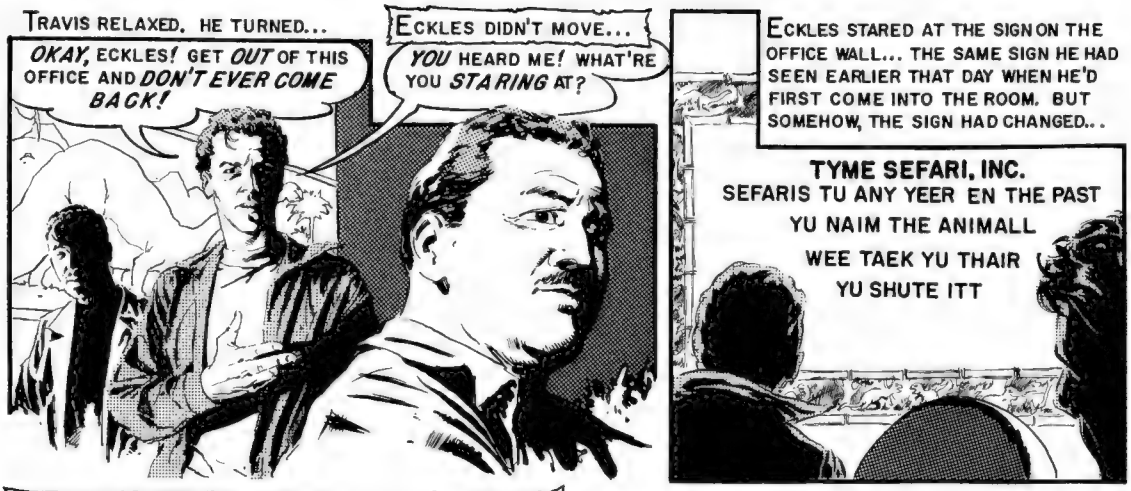
WE'RE HERE! GET OUT!

THE ROOM WAS AS THEY'D LEFT IT. THE SAME MAN SAT BEHIND THE SAME DESK. TRAVIS LOOKED AROUND, SUSPICIOUSLY...

EVERYTHING *OKAY* HERE?

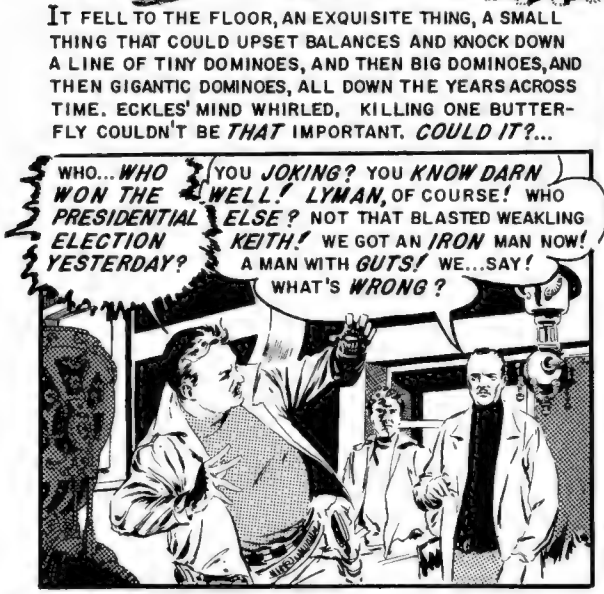
FINE! WELCOME BACK!

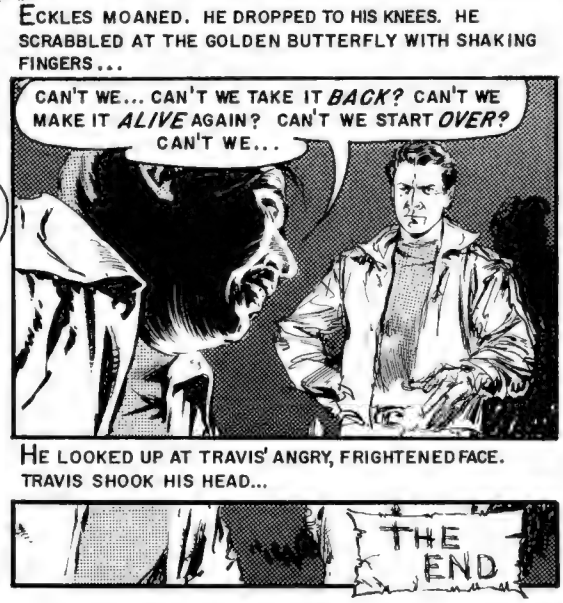
6

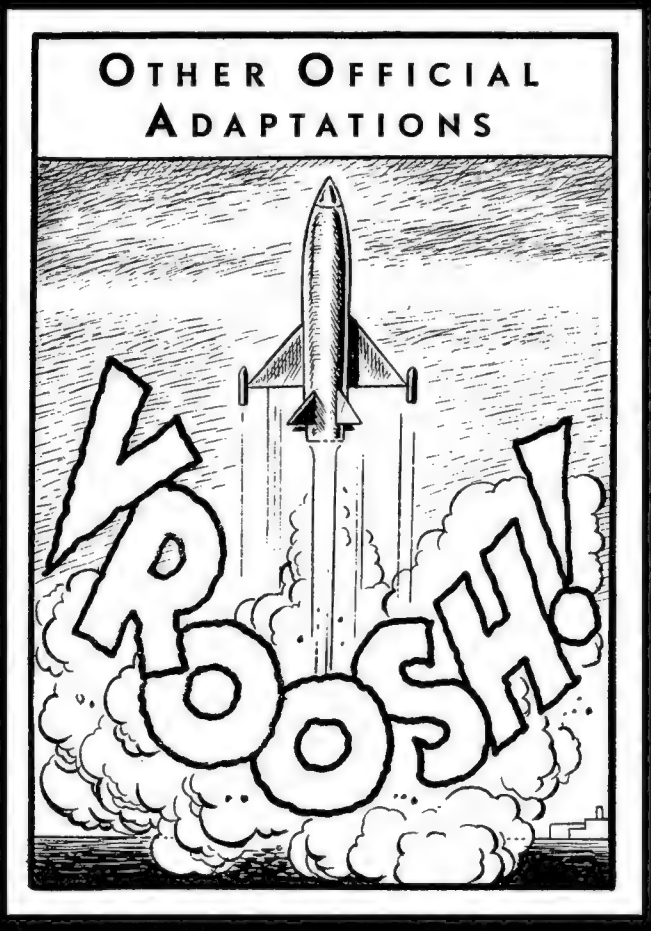

TRAVIS RELAXED. HE TURNED...
OKAY, ECKLES! GET OUT OF THIS OFFICE AND DON'T EVER COME BACK!
ECKLES DIDN'T MOVE...
YOU HEARD ME! WHAT'RE YOU STARING AT?
ECKLES STARED AT THE SIGN ON THE OFFICE WALL... THE SAME SIGN HE HAD SEEN EARLIER THAT DAY WHEN HE'D FIRST COME INTO THE ROOM. BUT SOMEHOW, THE SIGN HAD CHANGED...
TYME SEFARI, INC.
SEFARIS TU ANY YEER EN THE PAST
YU NAIM THE ANIMALL
WEE TAEK YU THAIR
YU SHUTE ITT

ECKLES FELT HIMSELF FALL INTO A CHAIR. HE FUMBLED CRAZILY AT THE THICK SLIME ON HIS BOOTS. HE HELD UP A CLOD OF MUD, TREMBLING...
NO! IT CAN'T BE! NOT A LITTLE THING LIKE THAT! NO!

EMBEDDED IN THE MUD, GLISTENING GREEN AND GOLD AND BLACK, WAS A BUTTERFLY... VERY BEAUTIFUL... AND VERY DEAD...
NOT A THING LIKE THAT! NOT A BUTTERFLY!


IT FELL TO THE FLOOR, AN EXQUISITE THING, A SMALL THING THAT COULD UPSET BALANCES AND KNOCK DOWN A LINE OF TINY DOMINOES, AND THEN BIG DOMINOES, AND THEN GIGANTIC DOMINOES, ALL DOWN THE YEARS ACROSS TIME. ECKLES' MIND WHIRLED. KILLING ONE BUTTERFLY COULDN'T BE THAT IMPORTANT. COULD IT?...
WHO... WHO WON THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION YESTERDAY?
YOU JOKING? YOU KNOW DARN WELL! LYMAN, OF COURSE! WHO ELSE? NOT THAT BLASTED WEAKLING KEITH! WE GOT AN IRON MAN NOW! A MAN WITH GUTS! WE...SAY! WHAT'S WRONG?

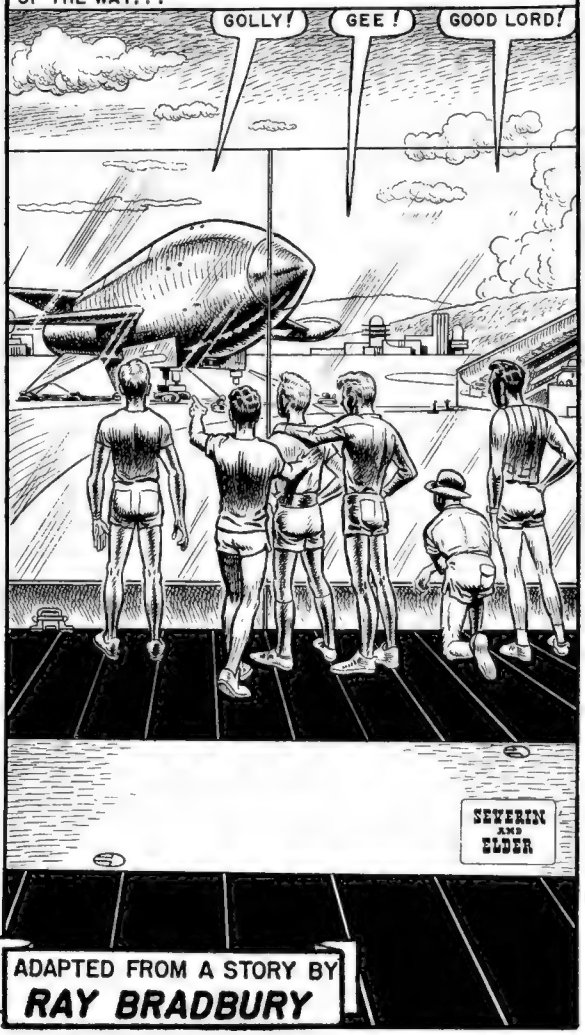

ECKLES MOANED. HE DROPPED TO HIS KNEES. HE SCRABBLED AT THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY WITH SHAKING FINGERS...
CAN'T WE... CAN'T WE TAKE IT BACK? CAN'T WE MAKE IT ALIVE AGAIN? CAN'T WE START OVER? CAN'T WE...
HE LOOKED UP AT TRAVIS' ANGRY, FRIGHTENED FACE. TRAVIS SHOOK HIS HEAD...
THE END


OTHER OFFICIAL
ADAPTATIONS
KROOSH!

WE WERE JUST A LOT OF KIDS. WITH CUT FINGERS, LUMPY HEADS AND WHINING TENOR VOICES. WE LIKED OUR GAME OF MIBS AS WELL AS THE NEXT RUMPLE-HAIR; BUT WE LIKED THE ROCKETS MORE!

King of the Grey Spaces!

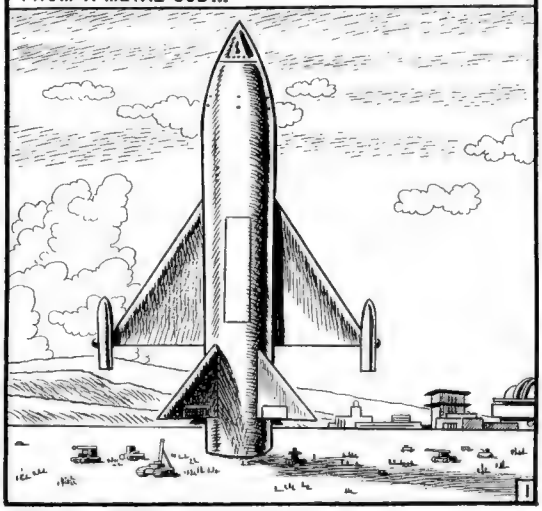
I QUIT BREATHING. I DIDN'T SUCK ANOTHER BREATH UNTIL THE SHIP WAS OUT ON THE FIELD, DRAGGED THERE BY CHUGGING TRACTORS, AND FOLLOWED BY A LOT OF LITTLE BUG-LIKE MECHANICS IN ASBESTOS SUITS AND FIREPROOF VISORS. EVERY LINE WAS LIKE PERFECT STEEL MUSCLES SLEEPING THERE, READY TO WAKE UP WITH A ROAR, JUMP UP AND HIT ITS SILLY HEAD AGAINST THE MILKY WAY'S CEILING, AND MAKE THE STARS FALL DOWN LIKE FRIGHTENED CONFETTI. YOU FELT IT COULD DO THAT, KICK THE UNIVERSE RIGHT IN THE BELLY AND TELL IT TO GET OUT OF THE WAY...



ADAPTED FROM A STORY BY
RAY BRADBURY

IT WAS SOMETHING TO 'GOOD LORD' ABOUT. IT WAS A HUNDRED YEARS OF DREAMING ALL SORTED OUT AND CHOSEN AND PUT TOGETHER TO MAKE THE HARDEST, PRETTIEST, SWIFTEST DREAM OF ALL. IT GOT ME IN THE STOMACH, TOO...IT GOT A STEEL GRIP THERE THAT MADE ME SICK WITH LONGING AND ENVY. AND WHEN THE PILOTS STROLLED ONTO THE FIELD, MY FEET WALKED WITH THEM...

AND THEN THE PRELIMINARIES GOT OVER WITH. THE FUEL WAS IN THE ROCKET AND THE MEN RAN AWAY FROM IT ON THE GROUND LIKE ANTS RUNNING LICKETY FROM A METAL GOD...



...AND THE DREAM WOKE UP AND GAVE A YELL AND JUMPED INTO THE SKY...

KROOSH!

...AND THEN IT WAS GONE, ALL THE VACUUM SHOUTING OF IT, LEAVING NOTHING BUT A TREMBLING IN THE AIR AND THROUGH THE GROUND, AND UP OUR LEGS TO OUR FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD HEARTS...

I...I WANT TO *GROW UP QUICK*. I WANT TO GROW UP QUICK SO I CAN *TAKE* THAT ROCKET.

I BIT MY LIPS. I WAS SO DARNED YOUNG, AND YOU CANNOT APPLY FOR SPACE WORK. YOU HAVE TO BE CHOSEN...*CHOSEN*...

C'MON! LET'S GO TO THE TELE-SHOW NOW!

YEAH! C'MON!

YOU GUYS GO AHEAD...

THE OTHER KIDS WENT OFF LAUGHING BREATHLESSLY, TALKING, AND LEFT PRIORY AND ME THERE TO LOOK AT THE SPOT WHERE THE SHIP HAD BEEN. THE OTHER KIDS WERE OKAY. THEY LOVED THE ROCKETS, TOO. BUT I HAD THE FEELING THAT THEY WOULDN'T BE DOING WHAT RALPH PRIORY AND I WOULD DO SOMEDAY. RALPH AND I WANTED THE STARS FOR EACH OF US, MORE THAN WE WANTED A FISTFUL OF BLUE-WHITE CLEAR-CUT DIAMONDS...

IT SPOILED EVERYTHING ELSE FOR US...THAT TAKEOFF. BECAUSE OF IT, I FLUNKED MY SEMANTICS TEST ON MONDAY. BUT I DIDN'T CARE. IT GOT SO BAD, I HAD TO USE SLEEP-MASSAGE MECHS EVERY NIGHT TO GET MY EYELIDS SEALED. THEN, MY TEACHER SPOKE TO ME...

LOOK HERE, CHRISTOPHER. IF *THIS* KEEPS UP, I'LL HAVE YOU *RECLASSIFIED* AT THE NEXT *PSYCH-BOARD MEETING!*

I'M... *SORRY*, SIR.

PHILOSOPHY

HE LOOKED HARD AT ME...

WHAT SORT OF *BLOCKING* HAVE YOU GOT? IT MUST BE A VERY *SIMPLE* ONE AND ALSO A *CONSCIOUS* ONE.

IT'S *CONSCIOUS*, SIR; BUT IT'S *NOT SIMPLE*. IT'S *MULTI-TENTACULAR*. IT'S THE... *ROCKETS!*

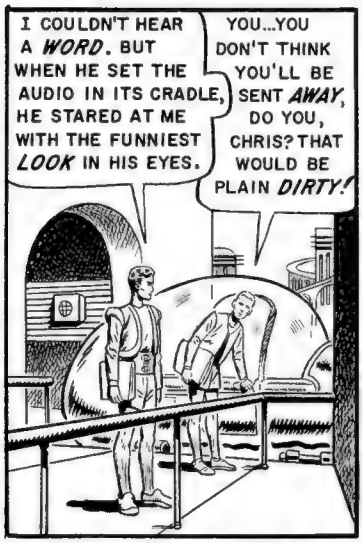
HE PICKED UP A SMALL TAB OF RECORDS WITH MY NAME BLOCKED ON THEM. HE FLIPPED THROUGH IT. I HAD A FUNNY STONE IN MY STOMACH, JUST LYING THERE...

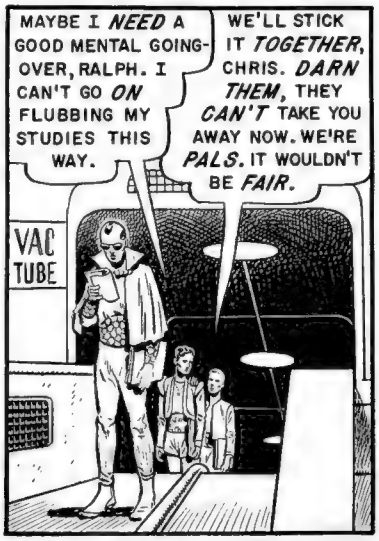
ROCKETS, EH? WELL, WE *CAN'T* LET IT INTERFERE WITH YOUR *SCHOLASTIC* RECORD, YOUNG MAN. HMMM! YOU *KNOW*, CHRISTOPHER, YOU'RE *KING-OF-THE-HILL* HERE; YOU'RE *HEAD OF THE CLASS*. WE'LL HAVE TO *SEE* ABOUT THIS...

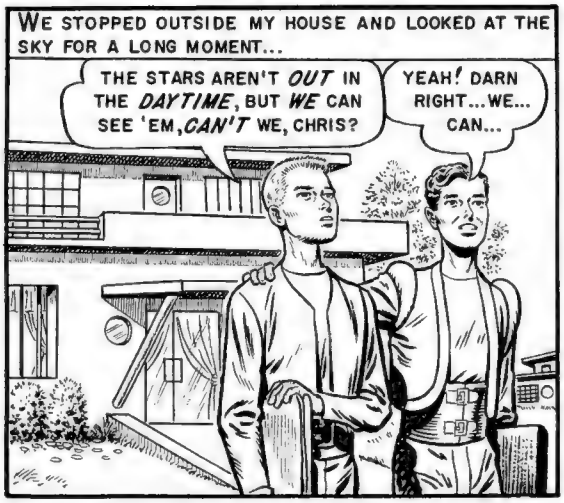
YES, SIR!

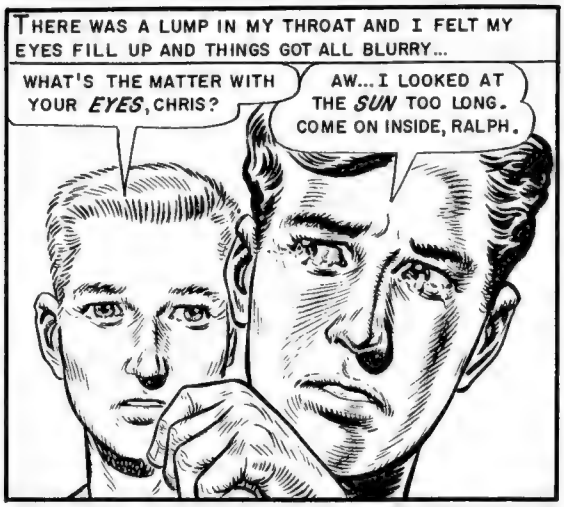
2

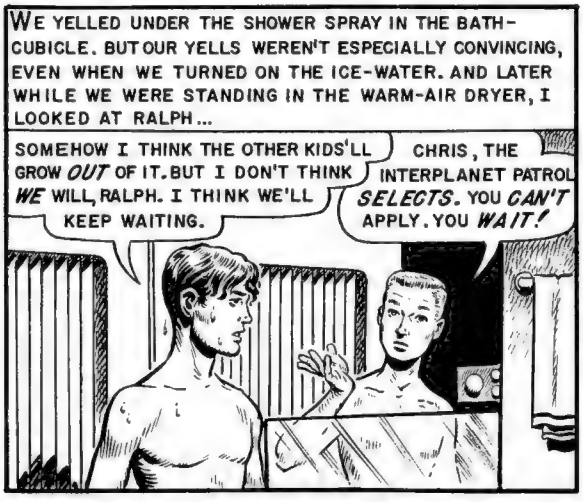
RALPH PRIORY AND I SLID HOME FROM FORMULA-SCHOOL TOGETHER THAT AFTERNOON. I TOLD HIM WHAT HAD HAPPENED...
I TRIED TO GET BACK TO WORK, BUT I COULDN'T. DURING THE REST OF THE DAY, THE TEACHER KEPT LOOKING AT ME AND LOOKING AT MY RECORD AND CHEWING HIS LIP. THEN HE MADE AN AUDIO-CALL...
WHAT'D HE SAY, CHRIS?

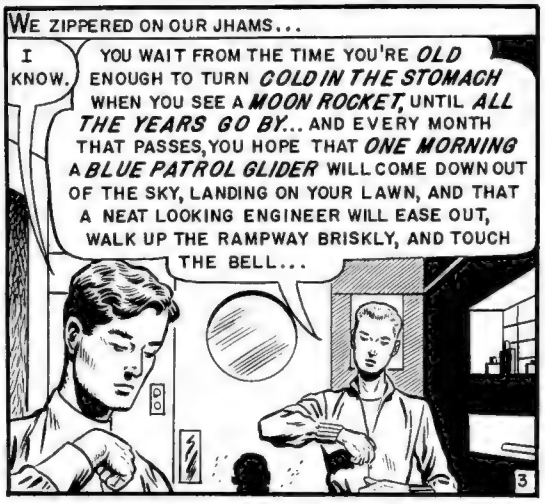

I COULDN'T HEAR A WORD. BUT WHEN HE SET THE AUDIO IN ITS CRADLE, HE STARED AT ME WITH THE FUNNIEST LOOK IN HIS EYES.
YOU...YOU DON'T THINK YOU'LL BE SENT AWAY, DO YOU, CHRIS? THAT WOULD BE PLAIN DIRTY!


MAYBE I NEED A GOOD MENTAL GOING-OVER, RALPH. I CAN'T GO ON FLUBBING MY STUDIES THIS WAY.
WE'LL STICK IT TOGETHER, CHRIS. DARN THEM, THEY CAN'T TAKE YOU AWAY NOW. WE'RE PALS. IT WOULDN'T BE FAIR.
VAC TUBE


WE STOPPED OUTSIDE MY HOUSE AND LOOKED AT THE SKY FOR A LONG MOMENT...
THE STARS AREN'T OUT IN THE DAYTIME, BUT WE CAN SEE 'EM, CAN'T WE, CHRIS?
YEAH! DARN RIGHT...WE... CAN...


THERE WAS A LUMP IN MY THROAT AND I FELT MY EYES FILL UP AND THINGS GOT ALL BLURRY...
WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOUR EYES, CHRIS?
AW... I LOOKED AT THE SUN TOO LONG. COME ON INSIDE, RALPH.


WE YELLED UNDER THE SHOWER SPRAY IN THE BATH-CUBICLE. BUT OUR YELLS WEREN'T ESPECIALLY CONVINCING, EVEN WHEN WE TURNED ON THE ICE-WATER. AND LATER WHILE WE WERE STANDING IN THE WARM-AIR DRYER, I LOOKED AT RALPH...
SOMEHOW I THINK THE OTHER KIDS'LL GROW OUT OF IT. BUT I DON'T THINK WE WILL, RALPH. I THINK WE'LL KEEP WAITING.
CHRIS, THE INTERPLANET PATROL SELECTS. YOU CAN'T APPLY. YOU WAIT!


WE ZIPPERED ON OUR JHAMS...
I KNOW.
YOU WAIT FROM THE TIME YOU'RE OLD ENOUGH TO TURN COLD IN THE STOMACH WHEN YOU SEE A MOON ROCKET, UNTIL ALL THE YEARS GO BY... AND EVERY MONTH THAT PASSES, YOU HOPE THAT ONE MORNING A BLUE PATROL GLIDER WILL COME DOWN OUT OF THE SKY, LANDING ON YOUR LAWN, AND THAT A NEAT LOOKING ENGINEER WILL EASE OUT, WALK UP THE RAMPWAY BRISKLY, AND TOUCH THE BELL...
3

RALPH'S FACE DARKENED...
YOU KEEP WAITING FOR THAT PATROL GLIDER UNTIL YOU'RE TWENTY-ONE. AND THEN ON THE LAST DAY OF YOUR TWENTIETH YEAR, YOU GET GOOD AND DRUNK AND LAUGH A LOT AND SAY WHAT THE HECK, YOU DIDN'T CARE ABOUT IT ANYWAY.
WE BOTH JUST SAT THERE, DEEP IN THE MIDDLE OF HIS WORDS...
I... I DON'T WANT THAT DISAPPOINTMENT, CHRIS. I'M FOURTEEN, JUST LIKE YOU. BUT IF I REACH MY TWENTY-FIRST YEAR WITHOUT ANYONE OF THE PATROL TOUCHING THE BELL AT THE ORTHO-STATION, I'LL...
I KNOW, RALPH. I'VE TALKED TO MEN WHO'VE WAITED AND DREAMED AND PRAYED.
AND IF IT HAPPENS THAT WAY, RALPH, WELL...WE'LL GET GOOD AND DRUNK TOGETHER AND THEN GO OUT AND TAKE JOBS LOADING CARGO...
LOADING CARGO...
HELLO, CHRIS... RALPH...
IT WAS MY MOTHER. SHE DIDN'T LOOK MUCH OLDER THAN TWENTY-FIVE, FOR HAVING RAISED ME AND WORKED IN THE GOVERNMENT STATISTICS OFFICE. SHE WAS LIGHT AND GRACEFUL AND SMILED A LOT, AND I COULD SEE HOW FATHER MUST HAVE LOVED HER MUCH WHEN HE WAS ALIVE...
YOU LOOK ILL, RALPH. WHAT'S WRONG?
NOTHIN'. NOTHIN' AT ALL.
ONE PARENT WAS BETTER THAN NONE. POOR PRIORY, NOW, RAISED IN THE ORTHOPEDICAL STATION...
YOU CAN STAY HERE WITH US TONIGHT, PRIORY. WE WANT YOU. DON'T WE, CHRIS?
HECK, YES!
GEE, THANKS! I'LL GO AUDIO IN AND TELL THEM...
WHEN RALPH WAS GONE, MOTHER LOOKED AT ME INTENTLY AND CAME AND SAT DOWN NEXT TO ME. SHE BRUSHED MY HAIR WITH A NICE LITTLE MOVE OF HER FINGERS. THEN SHE SAID...
SOMETHING'S HAPPENED, CHRIS! SOMETHING'S UP SOMEWHERE. I HAD TWO AUDIO CALLS AT WORK TODAY. ONE FROM YOUR TEACHER. ONE FROM... I CAN'T SAY. I DON'T KNOW. I DON'T WANT TO SAY UNTIL THINGS HAPPEN...
DON'T TELL ME, THEN, MOM. THOSE CALLS...
SHE JUST LOOKED AT ME. SHE TOOK MY HANDS BETWEEN HER TWO WARM ONES...
YOU'RE SO YOUNG, CHRIS. SO AWFULLY YOUNG. YOU NEVER KNEW YOUR FATHER. I WISH YOU HAD. YOU KNOW WHAT HE WAS, CHRIS. HE WORKED IN A CHEM LAB, DEEP UNDERGROUND. HE NEVER SAW THE STARS...
MOTHER! OH...
MY HEART YELLED IN MY CHEST. YELLED LOUD AND HARD...
4

WHEN I WOKE THE NEXT MORNING, PRIORY WAS GONE. THERE WAS A NOTE PINNED ON THE SLIDING DOOR. IT SAID...

'SEE YOU AT FORMULA CLASS. YOUR MOM WANTED ME TO DO SOME WORK FOR HER. SHE GOT A CALL THIS MORNING, AND SAID SHE NEEDED ME TO HELP. SEE YOU.

PRIORY'

PRIORY RUNNING ERRANDS. A CALL IN THE EARLY MORNING FOR MOM. STRANGE. SUDDENLY I HEARD THE KIDS DOWN BELOW ON THE LAWN-COURT...

HEY! HEY, CHRIS! YOU'RE LATE!

BE RIGHT DOWN, FELLAS!

NO, CHRIS...

MY MOTHER'S VOICE. IT WAS QUIET AND IT HAD SOMETHING FUNNY IN IT. SHE WAS STANDING IN THE DOORWAY BEHIND ME, HER FACE PALE, DRAWN, FULL OF SOME SMALL PAIN...

NO, CHRIS. TELL THEM TO GO ON TO FORMULA WITHOUT YOU... TODAY.

I FELT NUMB. I TURNED SLOWLY AND LOOKED DOWN AT THE KIDS...

HEY, CHRIS! C'MON!

SORRY, GANG. GO ON WITHOUT ME. I CAN'T GO TO FORMULA TODAY. SEE YOU LATER, HUH?

THEY MOVED OFF, NOT QUITE AS BOISTEROUSLY. I TURNED TO MOM...

WHY AM I STAYING HOME FROM FORMULA, MOM? WHY DID YOU SEND RALPH AWAY?

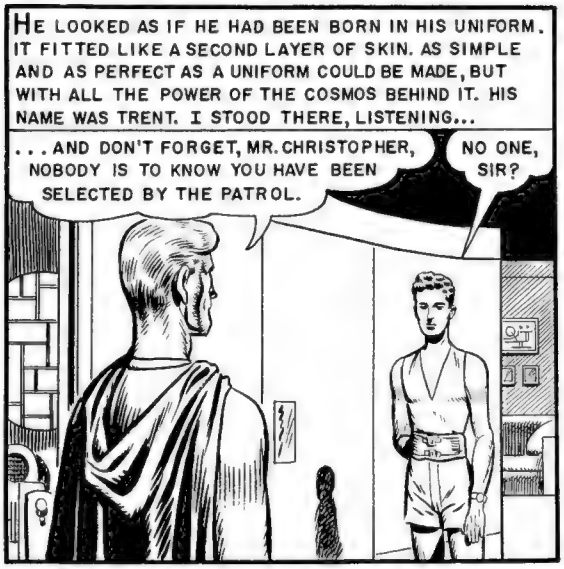
CHRIS, PLEASE DON'T ASK. PLEASE DON'T...

BEFORE I COULD SAY ANYTHING ELSE, THERE WAS A SOUND IN THE AIR. IT CUT THROUGH THE VERY SOUND-PROOFED WALL OF THE HOUSE. IT CAME CLOSER. IT LOWERED ITS PITCH AND CAME DOWN. I SWALLOWED. ALL THE FEAR AND UNCERTAINTY AND DOUBT WENT AWAY... INSTANTLY...

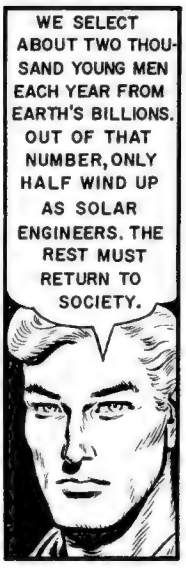
MOM! MOM! IT'S A PATROL CAR!

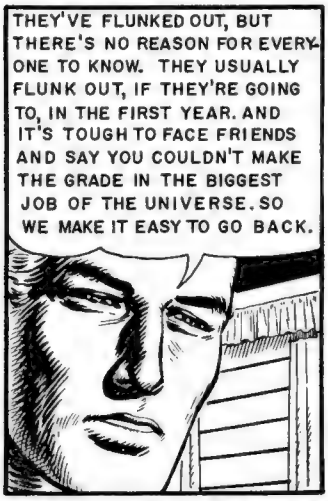
I HEARD FOOTSTEPS COMING UP THE RAMP BELOW. FOOTSTEPS THAT I HAD WAITED FOR A LONG TIME. FOOTSTEPS I HAD BEEN AFRAID WOULD NEVER COME. SOMEBODY TOUCHED THE BELL. AND I KNEW WHO IT WAS...

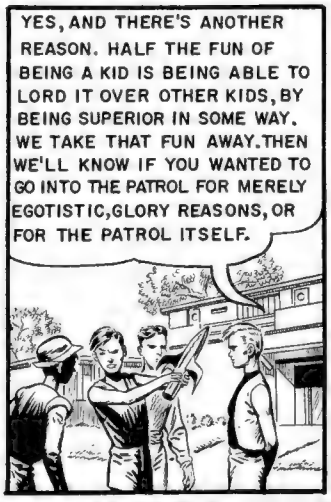
5

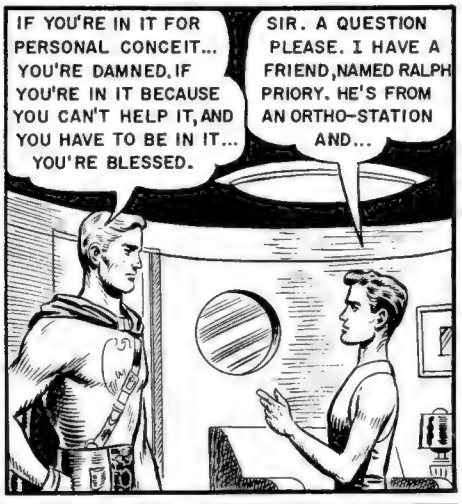

HE LOOKED AS IF HE HAD BEEN BORN IN HIS UNIFORM. IT FITTED LIKE A SECOND LAYER OF SKIN. AS SIMPLE AND AS PERFECT AS A UNIFORM COULD BE MADE, BUT WITH ALL THE POWER OF THE COSMOS BEHIND IT. HIS NAME WAS TRENT. I STOOD THERE, LISTENING...
. . . AND DON'T FORGET, MR. CHRISTOPHER, NOBODY IS TO KNOW YOU HAVE BEEN SELECTED BY THE PATROL.
NO ONE, SIR?

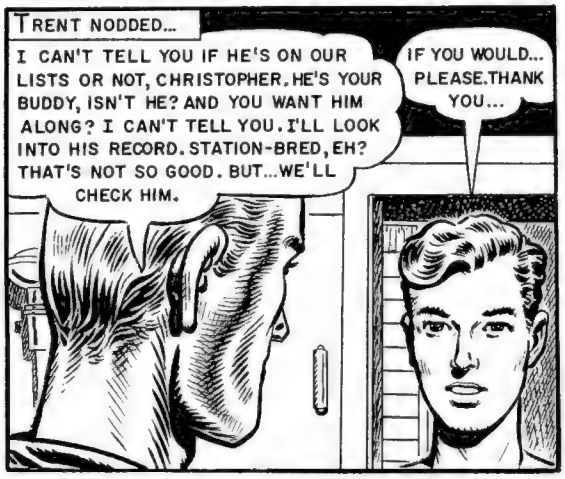
NO ONE EXCEPT THOSE WHO KNOW NOW. YOUR MOTHER AND YOUR TEACHER. YOU WANT TO ASK WHY, DON'T YOU? WHY YOU CAN'T TELL IT TO YOUR FRIENDS, BUT YOU'RE AFRAID TO ASK. I'LL EXPLAIN...

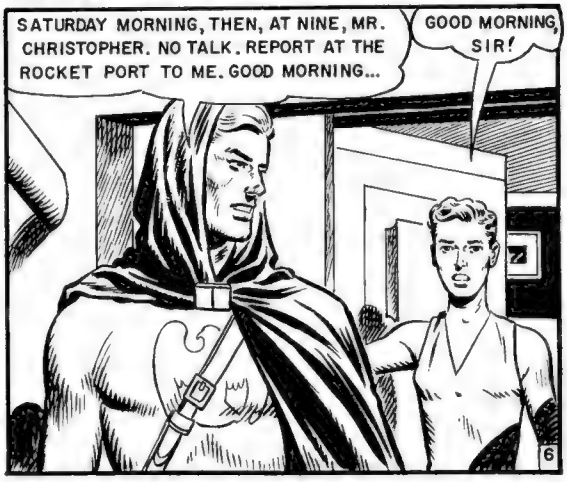

WE SELECT ABOUT TWO THOUSAND YOUNG MEN EACH YEAR FROM EARTH'S BILLIONS. OUT OF THAT NUMBER, ONLY HALF WIND UP AS SOLAR ENGINEERS. THE REST MUST RETURN TO SOCIETY.


THEY'VE FLUNKED OUT, BUT THERE'S NO REASON FOR EVERYONE TO KNOW. THEY USUALLY FLUNK OUT, IF THEY'RE GOING TO, IN THE FIRST YEAR. AND IT'S TOUGH TO FACE FRIENDS AND SAY YOU COULDN'T MAKE THE GRADE IN THE BIGGEST JOB OF THE UNIVERSE. SO WE MAKE IT EASY TO GO BACK.


YES, AND THERE'S ANOTHER REASON. HALF THE FUN OF BEING A KID IS BEING ABLE TO LORD IT OVER OTHER KIDS, BY BEING SUPERIOR IN SOME WAY. WE TAKE THAT FUN AWAY. THEN WE'LL KNOW IF YOU WANTED TO GO INTO THE PATROL FOR MERELY EGOTISTIC, GLORY REASONS, OR FOR THE PATROL ITSELF.


IF YOU'RE IN IT FOR PERSONAL CONCEIT... YOU'RE DAMNED. IF YOU'RE IN IT BECAUSE YOU CAN'T HELP IT, AND YOU HAVE TO BE IN IT... YOU'RE BLESSED.
SIR. A QUESTION PLEASE. I HAVE A FRIEND, NAMED RALPH PRIORY. HE'S FROM AN ORTHO-STATION AND...


TRENT NODDED...
I CAN'T TELL YOU IF HE'S ON OUR LISTS OR NOT, CHRISTOPHER. HE'S YOUR BUDDY, ISN'T HE? AND YOU WANT HIM ALONG? I CAN'T TELL YOU. I'LL LOOK INTO HIS RECORD. STATION-BRED, EH? THAT'S NOT SO GOOD. BUT...WE'LL CHECK HIM.
IF YOU WOULD... PLEASE. THANK YOU...


SATURDAY MORNING, THEN, AT NINE, MR. CHRISTOPHER. NO TALK. REPORT AT THE ROCKET PORT TO ME. GOOD MORNING...
GOOD MORNING, SIR!
6

HE SALUTED ME AND I WATCHED HIM TURN AND WALK OFF AND I HEARD THE PATROL CAR GO UP INTO THE SKY SINGING AWAY. MOTHER WAS BESIDE ME, HOLDING ME...
OH, CHRIS. CHRIS...
MOM. HOW...HOW WILL I TELL PRIORY? WHAT ABOUT HIM?
MOTHER WAS ALWAYS AHEAD OF MY THOUGHTS. SHE KNEW WHAT TO DO ALL THE TIME...
YOU'RE GOING AWAY, CHRIS. THAT'S ALL. TELL HIM THAT. TELL HIM YOU NEED PSYCHO-REORGANIZATION. HE'LL UNDERSTAND.
BUT, MOM, YOU...
YES, I'LL BE LONELY, CHRIS. BUT I'LL HAVE MY WORK AND I'LL HAVE PRIORY.
YOU MEAN YOU'RE TAKING HIM FROM THE ORTHO-STATION?
THAT'S WHAT YOU WANTED ME TO SAY, WASN'T IT, CHRIS?
THAT'S WHAT I WANTED YOU TO SAY, MOM.
HE'LL BE A GOOD SON, CHRIS. ALMOST AS GOOD AS YOU, BUT NOT QUITE.
HE'LL BE FINE.
WE TOLD RALPH HOW I WAS GOING AWAY AND HOW MOM WANTED HIM TO COME LIVE WITH HER. IT WAS FUNNY, BUT RALPH NEVER EVEN ASKED ME WHY I WAS GOING... OR WHERE...OR FOR HOW LONG. BUT IN THE DARKNESS ON THAT LAST NIGHT, JUST BEFORE WE FELL ASLEEP, HE WHISPERED...
YOU'RE... NOT WAITING ANY MORE, ARE YOU, CHRIS?
I...I'M AWFULLY TIRED, RALPH.
THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT. YOU'RE NOT WAITING ANY MORE. GOSH, BUT THAT'S GOOD, CHRIS. THAT'S GOOD.
HE REACHED OUT AND PINCHED ME, LIGHTLY...
7

MOM WASN'T HOME ON SATURDAY WHEN IT CAME TIME TO LEAVE. I FOUND A SPOOL OF AUDIO FILM ON MY BED AND INSERTED IT IN THE VIEWER. SOFT HAIR... HER WHITE FACE...AND THE WORDS...

I *HATE* GOOD-BYES, CHRIS. I'VE GONE TO THE *LAB* TO DO SOME *EXTRA WORK. GOOD LUCK. ALL* MY *LOVE*. WHEN I *SEE* YOU AGAIN...YOU'LL BE A *MAN*.

THAT WAS ALL. I RAN IT THROUGH FOUR TIMES...

PRIORY WALKED TO THE VAC-TUBE WITH ME. WE LOOKED AT EACH OTHER AND HE SWALLOWED...

CHRIS. I'LL BE *WAITING*. JUST LIKE *YOU* WAITED AND DON'T HAVE TO WAIT ANY MORE. *I'LL* WAIT.

MAYBE IT *WON'T BE LONG*, PRIORY. I *HOPE* NOT.

S81

THE TUBE DOOR SEALED. I WAS HURLED AWAY TO THE ROCKET PORT, AND PRIORY WAS LEFT BEHIND.

I STEPPED OUT OF THE TUBE AT THE PORT. IT WAS A FIVE HUNDRED YARD WALK TO THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING. IT TOOK ME TEN YEARS TO WALK IT. IT WAS ALL CHOKED UP IN MY HEART AND IT WOULDN'T GO AWAY, AND IT SWAM AROUND IN MY EYES AND IT PULLED MY LIPS DOWN, HARD...

NEXT TIME I SEE YOU, YOU'LL BE A MAN...

DON'T TELL ANYBODY...

I'LL WAIT, CHRIS...

I FELT SMALL THERE...WALKING, WALKING, WALKING...

THE AFTERNOON ROCKET FOR VENUS WAS JUST TAKING OFF AS I WENT DOWN THE RAMP TO THE OFFICE. IT SHIVERED THE GROUND AND IT SHIVERED AND THRILLED MY HEART.

VRROOM

I WAS BEGINNING TO GROW UP AWFULLY FAST.

I STOOD WATCHING IT UNTIL SOMEONE SNAPPED THEIR HEELS, CRACKED ME A SALUTE. I WAS NUMB...

C.M. CHRISTOPHER?

YES, SIR. REPORTING, SIR.

THIS WAY, MR. CHRISTOPHER.

YES, SIR.

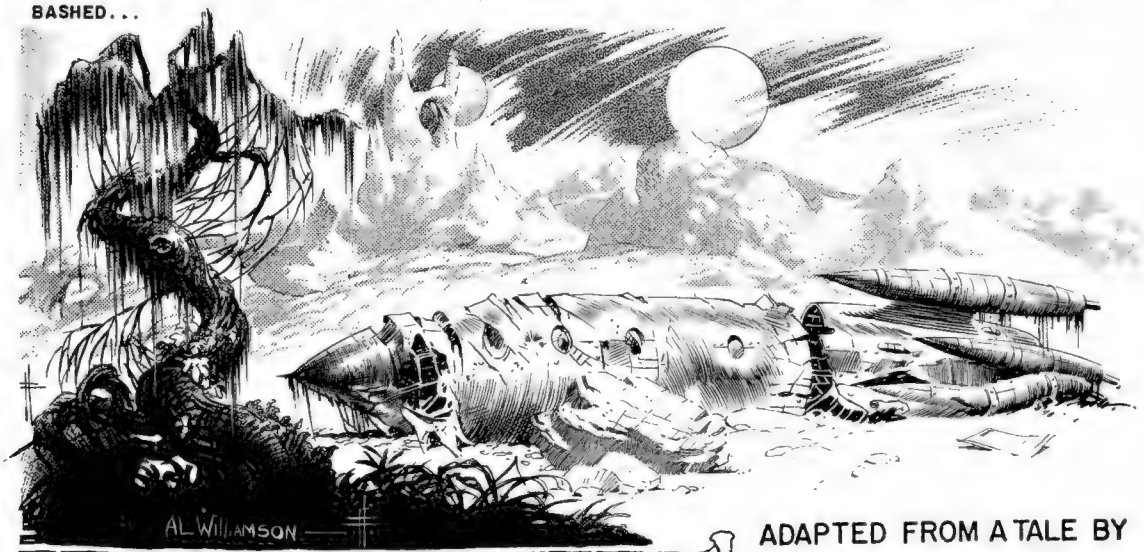
MOTHER. PRIORY. I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN... SOMEDAY. MOTHER... PRIORY...

WE WERE JUST A LOT OF KIDS, WITH CUT FINGERS, LUMPY HEADS AND WHINING TENOR VOICES. WE LIKED OUR GAME OF MIBS AS WELL AS THE NEXT RUMPLE-HAIR...

BUT WE LIKED THE ROCKETS MORE!

I, ROCKET

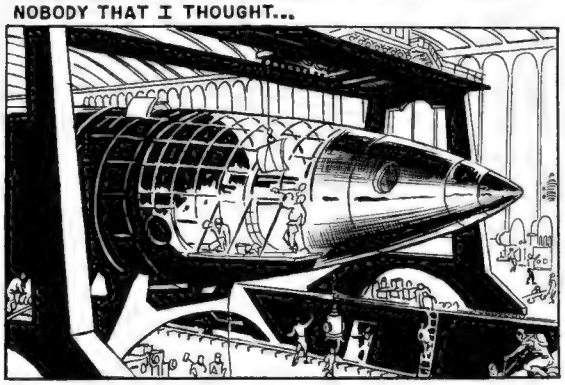
AT THE RATE THINGS ARE COMING AND GOING, IT'LL TAKE A FEW HUNDRED YEARS TO BREAK ME DOWN INTO RUST AND CORROSION... MAYBE LONGER. IN THE MEANTIME, I'LL HAVE MANY DAYS AND NIGHTS TO THINK IT OVER. YOU CAN'T STOP ATOMS FROM REVOLVING AND HUMMING THEIR LIFE-ORBITS INSIDE METAL. THAT'S HOW METAL LIVES ITS OWN SPECIAL LIFE. THAT'S HOW METAL THINKS. WHERE I LIE IS A BARREN, PEBBLED PLATEAU, WITH PALE, WEEDY GROWTHS AND A FEW HUNCHED TREES COMING UP OUT OF PLANETOID ROCK. THERE'S A WIND COMES OVER THE PLATEAU EVERY MORNING. THERE'S RAIN COMES IN THE TWILIGHT, AND A SILENCE COMES DOWN EVEN CLOSER IN THE NIGHT. THAT'S MY WHOLE LIFE, NOW... LYING HERE WITH MY JETS TWISTED AND MY FORE-PLATES BASHED...



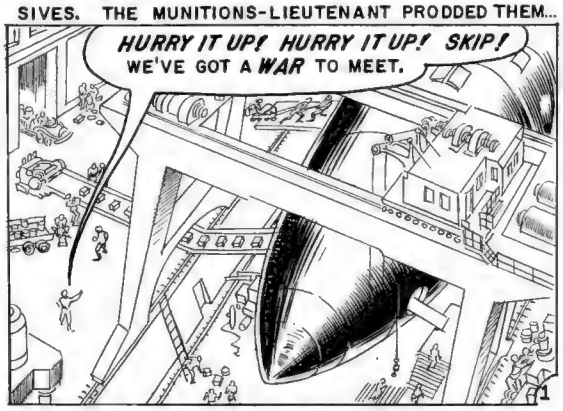
BUT WHILE I'M RUSTING AND WONDERING, I CAN THINK IT ALL OVER... HOW I CAME TO BE HERE, HOW I CAME TO BE BUILT...

ADAPTED FROM A TALE BY
RAY BRADBURY

I WAS A WAR ROCKET. MY BIRTH PERIOD, AND THE BASE WHERE I WAS INTEGRATED... SKELETON, SKIN, AND INNARDS... WENT THROUGH THE USUAL BIRTH PAINS. IT IS A DIM PORTION IN MY MEMORY, BUT WHEN THE FINAL HULL WAS MELTED TO ME, THE AWARENESS WAS THERE. A ***METAL*** AWARENESS. I COULD THINK, BUT TELL NOBODY THAT I THOUGHT...



FORE AND AFT THEY PLACED THEIR SPACE ARTILLERY NOZZLES, AND WEIGHTED ME WITH SCARLET AMMUNITION. I BEGAN TO FEEL MY PURPOSE, EXPECTANTLY, PERHAPS A BIT IMPATIENTLY. MEN HUSTLED IN AND OUT OF ME WITH SMALL RUBBER-TIRED TRUCKS BEARING EXPLOSIVES. THE MUNITIONS-LIEUTENANT PRODDED THEM...



THEN THERE WAS SOME FANCY BUSINESS ABOUT A CHRISTENING. SOME OFFICIAL'S DAUGHTER CRASHED A BOTTLE OF FOAMING LIQUOR ON MY PROW. A FEW REPORTERS FLICKED THEIR CAMERAS. AND A SMALL CROWD PUT UP THEIR HANDS, WAVED THEM, AND PUT THEM DOWN, AS IF THEY REALIZED HOW STUPID IT REALLY WAS WASTING THAT FINE CHAMPAGNE...

AND THEN I SAW THE CAPTAIN, METAL BLESS HIM, FOR THE FIRST TIME. HE CAME RUNNING ACROSS THE FIELD, THE MASTER OF MY FATE... THE CAPTAIN OF MY SOUL. I LIKED HIM RIGHT OFF. HE STOMPED ABOARD AND CRACKED OUT ORDERS...

SNAP IT! GET RID OF THAT *DAME*, AND THOSE *REPORTERS* OUT THERE. CLEAR THE *APRON!* SEAL THE *LOCKS!* CLAMP *PORTS!* WE'RE *PUSHING* THE BLAZES *OUT* OF HERE!

THEY WRAPPED ME TIGHT. THEY EXPELLED THE CROWD. SIRENS SHOUTED ACROSS THE BASE APRON. THE CREW DID THINGS TO MY ALIMENTARY CANAL. THE CAPTAIN SHOUTED. THAT WAS THE SLAP ON MY BACK THAT BROUGHT ME MY FIRST BREATH, MY FIRST SOUND, MY FIRST MOVEMENT. MY CAPTAIN POUNDED ME INTO LIVING...

I THREW OUT WINGS OF FIRE AND SMOKE. SUDDENLY I WASN'T METAL LYING IN THE SUN ANY MORE. I WAS THE BIGGEST DARN BIRD THAT EVER SANG INTO THE SKY. MAYBE MY VOICE WASN'T ANYTHING BUT THUNDER, BUT IT WAS STILL SINGING TO ME. I SANG LOUD AND I SANG LONG...

IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I'D SEEN THE WORLD. I WAS SURPRISED TO FIND THAT IT WAS ROUND...

YES, I LIKED MY CAPTAIN. HIS NAME WAS *LAMB*...IRONIC FOR A MAN LACKING LAMB-LIKE QUALITIES. CAPTAIN LAMB SAT IN MY CONTROL ROOM, CRACKING HIS KNUCKLES...

YES. SHE'S A *GOOD* SHIP! A *FINE* SHIP. WE'LL *POUND THE HOLY MARROW* OUT OF THOSE *MARTIANS*.

THE YOUNG MAN NAMED CONRAD SAT BESIDE THE CAPTAIN AT THE DUO-CONTROLS...

WE'D BETTER. THERE'S A *GIRL* WAITING IN YORK PORT FOR US TO COME *BACK*.

'US'! BOTH OF YOU? YOU *AND* HILLARY?

THE *TWO* OF US. *BOTH* ON THE *SAME* WAR ROCKET. AT LEAST I CAN KEEP MY *EYE* ON HIM. I'LL KNOW HE'S NOT DOWN *THERE* SCUDDING ALONG ON *MY* ACCELERATION...

SPACE IS A *FUNNY* PLACE TO TALK ABOUT *LOVE*. IT'S LIKE *LAUGHING OUT LOUD* IN A *BIG CATHEDRAL*...TRYING TO MAKE A *WALTZ* OUT OF A *HYMN*.

2

THEY WERE *PART* OF ME... *LAMB* AND *CONRAD* AND THE *CREW*. LIKE *BLOOD CORPUSCLES* PULSING IN THE ARTERIES OF A *WARM BODY*. AND LIKE *ANY* BODY, THERE WERE *MICROBES TOO*. *DESTROYING* ELEMENTS. THEIR NAMES WERE *LARION* AND *BELLOC*...

NOW AS FAR AS *KILLING* LAMB GOES... THAT'S *OUT!* WE'RE ONLY *TWO* AGAINST THE *REST*. I WANT TO COLLECT THAT *MONEY* WE'RE GUARANTEED...

SO DO I! THEN WE HIT THE *ENGINES*, EH, LARION?

A WELL-PLACED *TIME BOMB* SHOULD WORK *MIRACLES* WITH THE *MAIN JET ENGINE*. AND WHEN IT *HAPPENS*, WE CAN BE *OUT* AND *AWAY IN SPACE* IN *PLENTY* OF TIME.

SEEMS A *SHAME*. NICE NEW ROCKET, NEVER *TESTED* BEFORE. AND IT ALL GOES *BOOM* BEFORE IT HAS *PROVEN* ITSELF...

DON'T GET *SENTIMENTAL*, BELLOC. YOU'RE GETTING *PAID* FOR IT. NOW HERE'S THE PLAN. THERE'S A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF *CONFUSION* DURING THE SHIFT CHANGE-OVER. *HALF* THE CREW'S *GROGGY*. THE *OTHER* HALF'S TOO *TIRED* TO *WORRY*. NOW, DURING THE *NEXT* CHANGE-OVER, WE'LL...

SELF-PRESERVATION IS AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING THING. YOU FIND IT IN METAL AS YOU FIND IT IN MEN. MY BODY WAS TO BE ATTACKED. FROM OUTSIDE I FEARED NOTHING. FROM INSIDE, I WAS UNCERTAIN. I DIDN'T APPROVE OF THE IDEA...

LARION. BELLOC. GOING BELOW? I'LL BE DOWN IN THIRTY MINUTES. WE'LL CHECK THE AUXILIARIES TOGETHER.

RIGHT, SIR.

C'MON, BELLOC.

LARION AND BELLOC WENT BELOW TO THEIR STATIONS. THE CHANGE-OVER PROCEEDED. THE POISON WAS IN MY HEART...WAITING...

DID YOU CHECK THE *LIFE BOATS*, BELLOC?

NUMBER *THREE* BOAT'S READY TO *GO*. LET'S GET THIS *OVER* WITH...

MARS CAME UP AHEAD LIKE A RUDDY DROP OF DRIED BLOOD. THE WAR I'D NEVER SEEN BUT ALWAYS HEARD ABOUT WAS OUT THERE. I WANTED TO BE PART OF IT. I WANTED TO GET THERE WITH LAMB AND HILLARY AND CONRAD AND THE OTHERS. LARION CLIMBING RUNGS, ON HIS WAY TO GET THE TIME BOMB, BELLOC, WAITING BELOW. TIME GETTING SHORTER... SHORTER...

I THOUGHT ABOUT CAPTAIN LAMB AND THE WAY HE BARKED ORDERS, ABOUT HILLARY AND CONRAD THINKING ABOUT A WOMAN'S LIPS, ABOUT BELLOC, WAITING. AND SUDDENLY... THERE WAS A *HISS*, AN *EXPLOSION*...

WHAT IN...!

GOOD LORD!

WHAT WAS *THAT?*

SOMEBODY SCREAMED. I KNEW *WHO* IT WAS AND *WHERE* IT WAS AND *WHAT* IT WAS...

3

WARNING BELLS CLAMORED THROUGH ME. CONRAD SCUTTLED DOWN THE RUNGS, YELLING. HE VANISHED TOWARD THE ENGINE ROOM...

IT'S DOWN THERE...

HILLARY GRABBED THE SHIP'S CONTROLS AND FROZE THEM, LISTENING AND WAITING. HE SAID ONE WORD...

ALICE...

THE CAPTAIN GOT THERE FIRST. HE TOOK ONE LOOK AND SCREAMED...

CUT THE FEED VALVE... FOR GOD'S SAKE!

CONRAD GRASPED A VALVE WHEEL GLINTING ON THE WALL, TWISTING IT, GRUNTING. THE LOUD GUSHING NOISE STOPPED. STEAM CLOUDS BILLOWED IN MY HEART, WRAPPING CAPTAIN LAMB AND THE OTHERS TIGHT... MAKING THEM COUGH...

CHOKE...

WHAT HAPPENED...

IT'S BELLOC...

MY VACUUM VENTILATORS BEGAN HUMMING, CLEARING THE STEAM. THEY SAW BELLOC, LYING THERE. HE SAID NOT A WORD TO ANYBODY. HE JUST BLED WHERE THE EXPLODED OIL PIPE HAD CAUGHT HIM ON THE NOSE AND CHEEK AND PLUNGED ON BACK INTO HIS BRAIN...

HE'S... DEAD.

I...I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT. I CHECKED THOSE OIL LINES THIS MORNING. THEY WERE OKAY! I DON'T SEE...

FOOTSTEPS ON THE RUNGS. LARION CAME DOWN. HE LOOKED AS IF SOMEBODY'D KICKED HIM IN THE STOMACH WHEN HE SAW BELLOC LYING THERE. HIS FACE SUCKED BONE-WHITE, STARING, HIS JAW DROPPED...

YOU...YOU KILLED HIM! YOU FOUND OUT... FOUND OUT WHAT WE WERE GOING TO DO AND YOU KILLED HIM. WELL, I'LL SHOW YOU...

WHAT?

LARION BEGAN TO LAUGH. HE DARTED ABOUT SUDDENLY AND LEAPED UP THE LADDER RUNGS...

I'LL SHOW YOU...

STOP HIM...

4

CONRAD RUSHED UP THE LADDER AT LARION'S HEELS. CAPTAIN LAMB WATCHED THEM GO, LISTENING TO THE FADING FEET ON THE RUNGS, GOING UP AND UP...

WATCH IT...

A FEW MINUTES LATER, CONRAD CAME BACK DOWN THE LADDER. HE HELD UP THE TIME BOMB...

IT'S A GOOD THING THAT OIL PIPE *BURST*, CAP LARION TRIED TO *HIDE* THIS IN SUPPLY. IT'S A *BOMB. HE* AND *BELLOC*...

WHAT *ABOUT* LARION?

HE TRIED TO ESCAPE THROUGH AN EMERGENCY LIFE-BOAT AIR LOCK. THE FOOL WAS IN TOO MUCH OF A HURRY. HE OPENED THE OUTER DOOR TOO SOON AND WAS SUCKED OUT INTO SPACE. HE'S GONE FOR GOOD...

THE CAPTAIN LOOKED PUZZLED...

THAT'S FUNNY. HE *KNEW* HOW THOSE AIR LOCKS WORK. HE *WOULDN'T* HAVE MADE SUCH A *STUPID* MISTAKE. IT...IT MUST HAVE BEEN AN *ACCIDENT*...OR... OR...*SOMETHING ELSE!*

MY BODY WAS CLEANSED. THE ORGANIC POISON WAS ELIMINATED. MARS WAS VERY CLOSE NOW. RED. *BRIGHT* RED. IN ANOTHER SIX HOURS WE WOULD BE ENGAGED IN COMBAT...

I HAD MY TASTE OF WAR. WE DROVE DOWN, CAPTAIN LAMB AND THE MEN INSIDE ME, AND I PUT OUT MY ARMS FOR THE FIRST TIME, AND I CLOSED MY FINGERS OF POWER AROUND MARTIAN SHIPS...FIFTEEN OF THEM...

I SCREAMED. I TALKED TO THE STARS. I DISSECTED MARTIAN ROCKETS WITH QUICK CALM STROKES OF MY RAY-ARMS. AND SPUNKY LITTLE CAP LAMB GUIDED MY VITALS, SWEARING AT THE TOP OF HIS LUNGS...

LET'S GO, YOU DIRTY ©#-?!!S! LET'S KNOCK 'EM OUT OF THE UNIVERSE!*

ONE DAY CONRAD COLLAPSED UPON THE CONTROL DECK WITH A SHARD OF SHRAPNEL WEBBED IN HIS LUNGS...

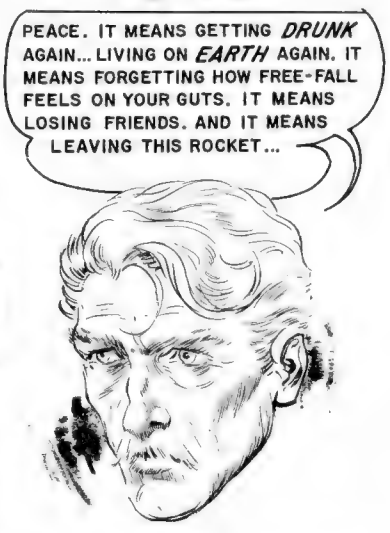
AND IT WAS HILLARY WHO TOOK THE NEWS BACK TO YORK PORT, TO THE GIRL THEY BOTH LOVED...

AND OTHERS OF THE CREW DIED WITHIN ME, THEIR BLOOD SPILLING OUT UPON MY DECK PLATES, WARM AND THICK. SLOP, THE COOK. AYRES, THE NAVIGATOR...

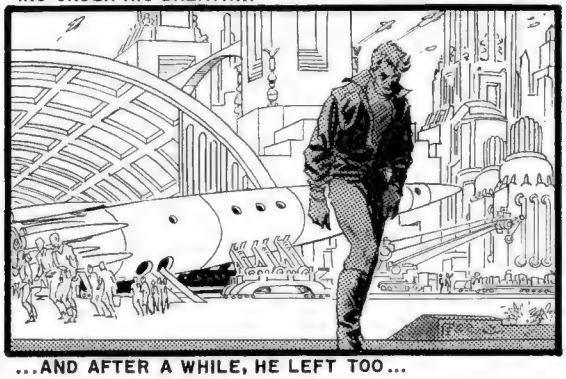
WE KNOCKED HOLES IN THE VACUUM. WE GOT WHAT WE WANTED OUT OF WAR, AND THEN... QUITE SUDDENLY ONE DAY... SPACE WAS SILENT. CAPTAIN LAMB SHRUGGED HIS SHOULDERS...

THE CREW MUTTERED, SHIFTING THEIR FEET...

IT'S BEEN GOOD. I WON'T DENY IT. I HAD A FINE CREW AND A SWEET SHIP. WE WORKED HARD. WE DID WHAT WE HAD TO DO. AND NOW IT'S ALL OVER. WE HAVE *PEACE*.


PEACE. IT MEANS GETTING *DRUNK* AGAIN... LIVING ON *EARTH* AGAIN. IT MEANS FORGETTING HOW FREE-FALL FEELS ON YOUR GUTS. IT MEANS LOSING FRIENDS. AND IT MEANS LEAVING THIS ROCKET...

WE LANDED IN YORK PORT WITHOUT FANFARE. THE CREW PACKED THEIR DUFFLE BAGS AND LEFT. CAPTAIN LAMB LINGERED AWHILE, WALKING THROUGH ME, SWEARING UNDER HIS BREATH...

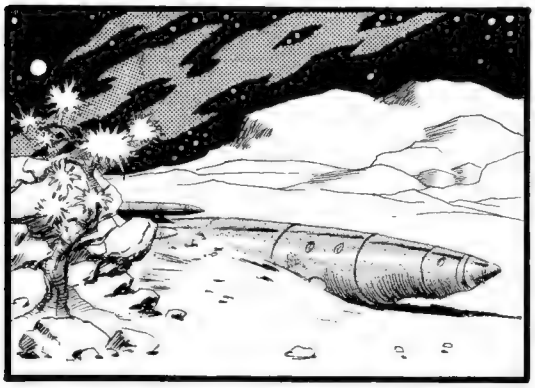


...AND AFTER A WHILE, HE LEFT TOO...

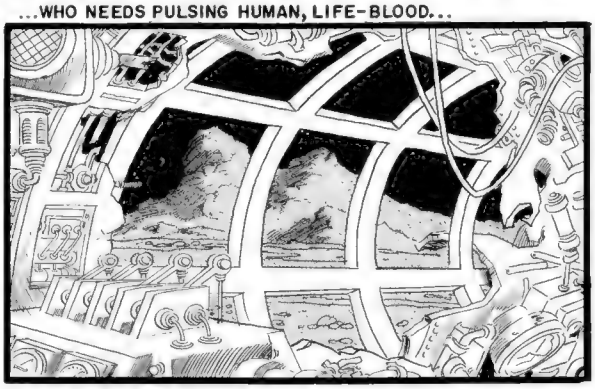
I WASN'T A WAR ROCKET ANYMORE. THEY CRAMMED ME WITH CARGO AND SHIPPED ME BACK AND FORTH TO VENUS FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS. I HAD A NEW CAPTAIN AND A STRANGE CREW AND A STRANGE PEACEFUL ROUTINE COMING AND GOING ACROSS THE STARS...

6

NOTHING IMPORTANT HAPPENED UNTIL JULY 17TH, 2243. THAT WAS THE DAY I CRACKED UP ON THIS WILD, PEBBLED LITTLE PLANETOID WHERE THE WIND WHINED AND THE RAIN POURED AND THE SILENCE WAS SO VERY SILENT...



A ROCKET THINKS IN ITSELF, BUT IT LIVES THROUGH ITS CREW AND ITS CAPTAIN. I'D BEEN LIVING ON BORROWED TIME SINCE CAPTAIN LAMB WENT AWAY AND NEVER CAME BACK. I LAY THERE THINKING ABOUT IT ALL... HELPLESS... LIKE A GIGANTIC METAL CHILD, AN IDIOT WHO NEEDS CONTROL ...WHO NEEDS PULSING HUMAN, LIFE-BLOOD...



UNTIL ONE DAY, AFTER THE RAIN, I SAW A SILVER SPECK IN THE SKY... A SHIP. IT CAME DOWN A HUNDRED YARDS FROM MY SILENT HULK. A MAN CLIMBED OUT. HE CAME WALKING UP THE PEBBLED HILL. HE STOOD IN MY AIR LOCK DOOR AND I HEARD HIM SAY...

...AND I KNEW WHO IT WAS...

CAPTAIN LAMB. AFTER ALL THESE YEARS...

I *HEARD* YOU WERE *LOST* FOUR MONTHS AGO. I THOUGHT I'D *HUNT YOU UP MYSELF.* JUST FOR *OLD TIMES' SAKE*...

HE CLIMBED THE RUNGS TO MY CONTROL ROOM AND STOOD THERE, SWAYING, REMEMBERING ALL THE OLD TIMES WE HAD TOGETHER...

HILLARY! CONRAD! AYRES! SLOP! WHERE IN BLAZES *IS* EVERYBODY? WHERE IN *GOD-BLAMED*... CHOKE...

SILENCE. HE QUIT YELLING FOR PEOPLE WHO COULDN'T ANSWER HIM. HE SAT DOWN IN THE CONTROL CHAIR... TALKED TO ME...

THINGS ARE TURNING BAD ON VENUS. COLONIALS REVOLTING. YOU'RE *OLD-FASHIONED*, BUT YOU'RE *PROUD* AND *TALL*, AND A *FIGHTER!* YOU CAN *FIGHT AGAIN!* SO *HELP ME GOD*, I'LL BE *CAPTAIN OF YOU AGAIN*...

AND SO I'VE BEEN LYING HERE, WAITING FOR THE REPAIR CREW TO COME, WAITING WITH A STIRRING OF MY OLD ANTICIPATION. I'VE BEEN DEAD A WHILE, AND CAP LAMB HAS SHOWED UP TO SLAP ME BACK TO LIFE. THEY'LL GO OVER ME FROM SEAM TO SEAM... AND SOMEDAY SOON, CAP LAMB WILL STOMP INTO MY AIR LOCK AND SHOUT...

SNAP IT! CLEAR THE *APRON!* SEAL THE *LOCKS!* CLAMP *PORTS.* WE'RE *PUSHING* THE BLAZES *OUT* OF HERE!

...AND I'LL BE *LIVING* AND *BREATHING* AND *MOVING* AGAIN... OFF TO WAR AGAIN! *OFF TO WAR*...

THE END

The OCTOBER GAME

MITCH PUT THE GUN BACK INTO THE BUREAU DRAWER...
NO, NOT THAT WAY. LOUISE WOULDN'T SUFFER THAT WAY. SHE WOULD BE DEAD AND IT WOULD BE OVER AND SHE WOULDN'T SUFFER. IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT THIS THING HAVE, ABOVE ALL, DURATION. DURATION THROUGH IMAGINATION. HOW CAN I PROLONG HER SUFFERING? HOW, FIRST OF ALL, CAN I BRING IT ABOUT? WELL...

A HORROR SUSPENSTORY
ADAPTED FROM A TALE BY
RAY BRADBURY

THE MAN STANDING BEFORE THE BEDROOM MIRROR CAREFULLY FITTED HIS CUFF LINKS TOGETHER. HE PAUSED LONG ENOUGH TO HEAR THE CHILDREN RUN BY SWIFTLY ON THE STREET BELOW, OUTSIDE THIS WARM TWO-STORY HOUSE; LIKE SO MANY GRAY MICE, THE CHILDREN. . . LIKE SO MANY LEAVES...

BY THE SOUND OF THE CHILDREN, YOU KNEW THE CALENDAR DAY. BY THEIR SCREAMS, YOU KNEW WHAT EVENING IT WAS. YOU KNEW IT WAS VERY LATE IN THE YEAR. OCTOBER. THE LAST DAY OF OCTOBER, WITH WHITE BONE MASKS AND CUT PUMPKINS AND THE SMELL OF DROPPED CANDLE FAT...
1

NO. THINGS HADN'T BEEN RIGHT FOR SOME TIME. OCTOBER DIDN'T HELP ANY. IF ANYTHING, IT MADE THINGS WORSE. HE NODDED SLOWLY AT HIS IMAGE IN THE MIRROR... ADJUSTING HIS BLACK BOW TIE...

IF... IF THIS WERE *SPRING*, THEN THERE MIGHT BE A *CHANCE*. BUT *TONIGHT*, ALL THE WORLD IS BURNING DOWN INTO *RUIN*. THERE'S NO *GREEN* OF SPRING, NONE OF THE *FRESHNESS*, NONE OF THE *PROMISE*...

MITCH HAD NEVER LIKED OCTOBER... EVER SINCE HE FIRST LAY IN THE AUTUMN LEAVES BEFORE HIS GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE MANY YEARS AGO AND HEARD THE WIND AND SAW THE EMPTY TREES. IT HAD MADE HIM CRY.. WITHOUT A REASON...

SOB... SOB...

AND A LITTLE OF THAT SADNESS RETURNED EACH YEAR TO HIM. IT ALWAYS WENT AWAY WITH THE SPRING.

BUT IT WAS *DIFFERENT* TONIGHT. THERE WAS A FEELING OF AUTUMN COMING TO LAST A *MILLION YEARS*. THERE WOULD *BE NO SPRING*. HE HAD BEEN CRYING QUIETLY ALL EVENING. IT DIDN'T SHOW ON HIS FACE. IT WAS ALL SOMEWHERE HIDDEN. BUT IT WOULDN'T STOP...

DADDY?

MARION?

THERE WAS A SOFT RUNNING IN THE HALL. IT WAS MARION, HIS LITTLE ONE. ALL EIGHT QUIET YEARS OF HER. NEVER A WORD. JUST HER LUMINOUS GRAY EYES AND HER WONDERING LITTLE MOUTH. MARION HAD BEEN IN AND OUT ALL EVENING, TRYING ON VARIOUS MASKS, ASKING HIM WHICH WAS MOST TERRIFYING, MOST HORRIBLE. THEY'D BOTH FINALLY DECIDED...

THE *SKELETON* MASK, DEAR. IT'LL 'SCARE THE *BEANS*' FROM PEOPLE!

ISN'T IT JUST *AWFUL*, DADDY? I LIKE IT, TOO!

AS HE FINISHED HIS BOW TIE AND PUT ON HIS DARK COAT, MARION APPEARED IN THE DOOR, ALL SKELETONOUS IN HER DISGUISE...

HOW DO I *LOOK*, DADDY?

FINE!

FROM UNDER THE MASK, BLONDE HAIR SHOWED. FROM THE SKULL SOCKETS, SMALL BLUE EYES SMILED. MITCH SIGHED. MARION... AND LOUISE... THE TWO SILENT DENOUNCERS OF HIS VIRILITY, HIS DARK POWER...

COMING DOWN, DADDY?

IN A MOMENT...

2

WHAT *ALCHEMY* HAD THERE BEEN IN LOUISE THAT TOOK THE DARK OF A DARK MAN AND BLEACHED AND BLEACHED THE DARK BROWN EYES AND BLACK HAIR AND WASHED AND BLEACHED THE INGROWN BABY ALL DURING THE PERIOD BEFORE BIRTH UNTIL THE CHILD WAS BORN, MARION, BLONDE, BLUE EYES, RUDDY-CHEEKED...

IT'S A *GIRL*, MITCH. A *BLONDE, BLUE-EYED GIRL...*

OH...

SOMETIMES HE SUSPECTED THAT LOUISE HAD CONCEIVED THE CHILD AS AN IDEA, COMPLETELY ASEXUAL, A CONCEPTION OF CONTEMPTUOUS MIND AND CELL. AS A FIRM *REBUKE* TO HIM, SHE HAD PRODUCED A CHILD IN HER *OWN* IMAGE. HER EYES, THAT DAY IN THE HOSPITAL, WERE COLD. THEY'D SAID...

I HAVE A *BLONDE DAUGHTER*, MITCH. *LOOK...*

LOUISE HAD *NEVER WANTED* A CHILD. SHE'D BEEN *FRIGHTENED* OF THE IDEA OF BIRTH. HE'D *FORCED* THE CHILD ON HER. IT HAD BEEN VERY *EASY* FOR LOUISE TO *HATE* THIS HUSBAND WHO *SO WANTED A SON THAT HE'D GIVE HIS ONLY WIFE OVER TO A MORTUARY.* WHEN MITCH HAD PUT OUT A HAND TO TOUCH, THE MOTHER HAD TURNED AWAY TO CONSPIRE WITH HER NEW PINK DAUGHTER-CHILD, AWAY FROM THE DARK FORCING MURDERER...

NO. DON'T *TOUCH* HER...

LOUISE. I...

AND IT HAD ALL BEEN SO BEAUTIFULLY IRONIC. HIS SELFISHNESS DESERVED IT. THE DOCTOR HAD SHAKEN HIS HEAD AND SAID...

SORRY, MR. WILDER, YOUR WIFE WILL *NEVER* HAVE *ANOTHER CHILD.* THIS WAS THE *LAST ONE!*

AND...AND I WANTED A *BOY!*

NOW IT WAS OCTOBER AGAIN. THERE HAD BEEN OTHER OCTOBERS. HE'D THOUGHT OF THE LONG WINTERS, YEAR AFTER YEAR, THE ENDLESS MONTHS MORTARED INTO THE HOUSE BY AN INSANE FALL OF SNOW, TRAPPED WITH A WOMAN AND CHILD, NEITHER OF WHOM LOVED HIM...

DURING THE EIGHT YEARS, THERE HAD BEEN RESPITES. IN SPRING AND SUMMER HE GOT OUT, WALKED, WENT TO BALL GAMES; THERE WERE DESPERATE SOLUTIONS TO THE DESPERATE PROBLEM OF A HATED MAN...

3

BUT IN WINTER, THE HIKES AND GAMES AND ESCAPES FELL AWAY WITH THE LEAVES. LIFE, LIKE A TREE, STOOD EMPTY, THE FRUIT PICKED, THE SAP RUN TO EARTH. AND NOW, THE EIGHTH WINTER COMING, HE KNEW THINGS WERE FINALLY AT AN END. HE SIMPLY COULD NOT WEAR THIS ONE THROUGH...

OOOOH! THE *BELL*. THEY'RE *HERE!*

RINNG!!

THERE WAS AN ACID WALLED OFF IN HIM THAT HAD SLOWLY EATEN THROUGH TISSUE AND TISSUE OVER THE YEARS... AND NOW, TONIGHT, IT WOULD REACH THE WILD EXPLOSIVE IN HIM AND ALL WOULD BE OVER. DOWNSTAIRS, THERE WERE SHOUTS AND HILARITY... MARION, GREETING THE FIRST ARRIVALS... LOUISE, TAKING PARENTS' COATS...

A RICH SYRUPY SMELL OF CANDY FILLED THE BUSTLING HOUSE. LOUISE HAD LAID OUT APPLES IN NEW SKINS OF CARAMEL. THERE WERE VAST BOWLS OF PUNCH, FRESH-MIXED...

... STRINGED APPLES IN EACH DOORWAY... SCOOPED, VENTED PUMPKINS PEERING TRIANGULARLY...

...AND A WAITING TUB OF WATER IN THE CENTER OF THE LIVING ROOM, WAITING WITH A SACK OF APPLES NEARBY FOR THE BOBBLING TO BEGIN...

MITCH WALKED TOWARD THE STAIRS. HE HESITATED...

WHY DON'T I JUST PACK A *SUITCASE* AND *LEAVE?* NO. NOT WITHOUT *HURTING* LOUISE AS MUCH AS *SHE'S* HURT *ME*. *DIVORCE* WOULDN'T HURT HER AT *ALL*. NO, I MUST *HURT* HER. FIGURE SOME WAY TO TAKE *MARION* AWAY FROM HER, LEGALLY. YES. *THAT'S* IT. *THAT* WOULD *HURT MOST OF ALL*. TO TAKE *MARION* AWAY...

HE DESCENDED THE STAIRS. LOUISE DIDN'T LOOK UP. THE CHILDREN SHOUTED AND WAVED AS HE CAME DOWN...

HELLO, DOWN THERE!

HI, MR. WILDER!

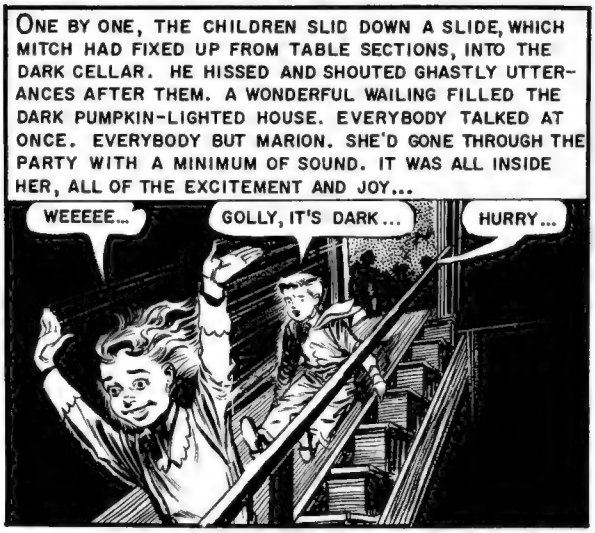
HI.

BY TEN O'CLOCK THE DOORBELL HAD STOPPED RINGING, THE APPLES WERE BITTEN FROM STRINGED DOORS, THE PINK CHILD FACES WERE WIPED DRY FROM APPLE BOBBLING, NAPKINS WERE SMEARED WITH CARAMEL AND PUNCH, AND HE, THE HUSBAND, HAD TAKEN OVER. HE TOOK THE PARTY RIGHT OUT OF LOUISE'S HANDS. HE RAN ABOUT, TALKING TO THE TWENTY CHILDREN AND THE TWELVE PARENTS, WHO WERE HAPPY WITH THE SPECIAL SPIKED CIDER HE'D FIXED THEM...

HE SUPERVISED PIN THE TAIL ON THE DONKEY...
...SPIN THE BOTTLE...
...MUSICAL CHAIRS...
...AND ALL THE REST, MIDST FITS OF SHOUTING LAUGHTER. THEN, IN THE TRIANGULAR-EYED PUMPKIN SHINE, ALL HOUSE LIGHTS OUT, HE CRIED...
HUSH! FOLLOW ME!

HE TIPTOED TOWARD THE CELLAR. THE PARENTS COMMENTED TO EACH OTHER, NODDING AT THE CLEVER HUSBAND, SPEAKING TO THE LUCKY WIFE...
HOW WELL HE GETS ON WITH THE CHILDREN.
YES.
THE CELLAR! THE TOMB OF THE WITCH!

THE CHILDREN CROWDED AFTER THE HUSBAND, SQUEALING. HE MADE A MOCK SHIVER...
ABANDON HOPE... ALL YE WHO ENTER HERE.
THE PARENTS CHUCKLED...


ONE BY ONE, THE CHILDREN SLID DOWN A SLIDE, WHICH MITCH HAD FIXED UP FROM TABLE SECTIONS, INTO THE DARK CELLAR. HE HISSED AND SHOUTED GHASTLY UTTERANCES AFTER THEM. A WONDERFUL WAILING FILLED THE DARK PUMPKIN-LIGHTED HOUSE. EVERYBODY TALKED AT ONCE. EVERYBODY BUT MARION. SHE'D GONE THROUGH THE PARTY WITH A MINIMUM OF SOUND. IT WAS ALL INSIDE HER, ALL OF THE EXCITEMENT AND JOY...
WEEEEE...
GOLLY, IT'S DARK...
HURRY...

NOW, THE PARENTS. WITH LAUGHING RELUCTANCE THEY SLID DOWN THE INCLINE, UPROARIOUS, WHILE MARION STOOD BY, ALWAYS WANTING TO SEE IT ALL, TO BE THE LAST. LOUISE WENT DOWN WITHOUT MITCH'S HELP. MARION STOOD BY THE SLIDE. MITCH PICKED HER UP...
HERE WE GO...
5

THEY SAT IN A VAST CIRCLE IN THE CELLAR. WARMTH CAME FROM THE DISTANT BULK OF THE FURNACE. THE CHAIRS STOOD IN A LONG LINE DOWN EACH WALL, TWENTY SQUEALING CHILDREN, TWELVE RUSTLING RELATIVES, ALTERNATELY SPACED. THEY HAD ALL GROPED TO THEIR CHAIRS IN THE BLACKNESS. THE ENTIRE PROGRAM FROM HERE ON WAS TO BE ENACTED IN THE DARK, HE AS MR. INTERLOCUTOR...

THERE WAS A SMELL OF DAMP CEMENT AND THE SOUND OF THE WIND OUT IN THE OCTOBER STARS. EVERYBODY SETTLED. THE ROOM WAS BLACK BLACK. NOT A LIGHT, NOT A SHINE, NOT A GLINT OF AN EYE. THERE WAS A SCRAPING OF CROCKERY, A METAL RATTLE. THE HUSBAND INTONED...

THE WITCH IS DEAD, SHE HAS BEEN *KILLED*, AND *HERE* IS THE *KNIFE* SHE WAS *KILLED WITH.*

HE HANDED OVER THE KNIFE. IT WAS PASSED FROM HAND TO HAND, DOWN AND AROUND THE CIRCLE, WITH CHUCKLES AND LITTLE ODD CRIES AND COMMENTS FROM THE ADULTS...

THE WITCH IS DEAD, AND THIS IS HER *HEAD.*

...WHISPERED THE HUSBAND, AND HANDED AN ITEM TO THE NEAREST PERSON.

SOME LITTLE CHILD CRIED HAPPILY IN THE DARK...

OH, I KNOW HOW *THIS* GAME IS PLAYED. HE GETS SOME OLD *CHICKEN* INNARDS AND HE HANDS THEM AROUND SAYING 'THESE ARE HER INNARDS!', AND HE MAKES A *CLAY HEAD* AND PASSES IT FOR HER HEAD, AND PASSES A *SOUP BONE* FOR HER *ARM*, AND HE TAKES A *MARBLE* AND SAYS, 'THIS IS HER *EYE!*', AND SOME *CORN* FOR HER *TEETH* AND A SACK OF *PLUM PUDDING* AND GIVES THAT AND SAYS, 'THIS IS HER *STOMACH!*' I KNOW HOW *THIS* IS PLAYED!

MITCH SAID...

THE ITEMS WERE PASSED AND PASSED, LIKE HOT POTATOES, AROUND THE CIRCLE. SOME CHILDREN SCREAMED, WOULDN'T TOUCH THEM. SOME RAN FROM THEIR CHAIRS TO STAND IN THE CENTER OF THE CELLAR UNTIL THE GRISLY ITEMS HAD PASSED. ONE BOY SCOFFED...

SHOT FROM HAND TO HAND WITH SMALL SCREAM AFTER SCREAM, THE ITEMS WENT DOWN THE LINE, DOWN, DOWN, TO BE FOLLOWED BY ANOTHER AND ANOTHER. THE HUSBAND SAID...
THE WITCH IS CUT APART, AND THIS IS HER HEART.

SIX OR SEVEN ITEMS MOVING AT ONCE THROUGH THE LAUGHING, TREMBLING DARK, LOUISE SPOKE UP...
MARION DON'T BE AFRAID; IT'S ONLY PLAY.

MARION DIDN'T SPEAK. LOUISE ASKED...
MARION? ARE YOU AFRAID?
SHE'S ALL RIGHT. SHE'S NOT AFRAID.
...SAID THE HUSBAND. MARION DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING...

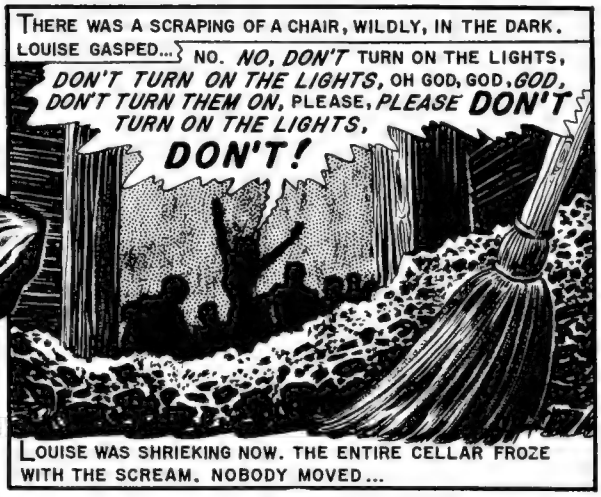
ON AND ON THE PASSING, THE SCREAMS, THE HILARITY. THE AUTUMN WIND SIGHED ABOUT THE HOUSE. AND HE, THE HUSBAND, STOOD IN THE DARK CELLAR, INTONING THE WORDS, HANDING OUT THE ITEMS. LOUISE'S VOICE CAME AGAIN FROM FAR ACROSS THE CELLAR...
MARION?

EVERYBODY WAS TALKING...
MARION, ANSWER ME, ARE YOU AFRAID?
EVERYBODY QUIETED...

MARION DIDN'T ANSWER. THE HUSBAND STOOD THERE AT THE HEAD OF THE DARK CELLAR... LOUISE CALLED...
MARION, ARE YOU THERE?

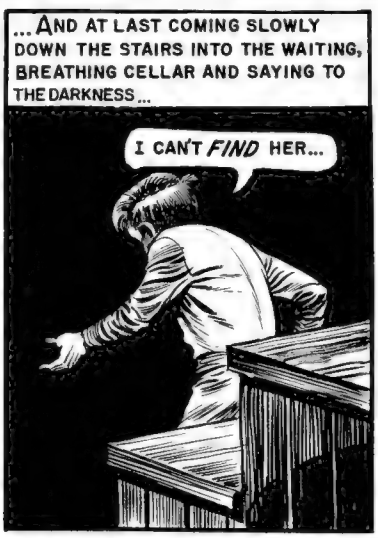
NO ANSWER. THE ROOM WAS SILENT...
WHERE'S MARION?
MAYBE SHE'S UPSTAIRS?
MARION!
NO ANSWER... IT WAS QUIET...
7

THE ITEMS STOPPED PASSING. THE CHILDREN AND ADULTS SAT WITH THE WITCHES' ITEMS IN THEIR HANDS.


THERE WAS A SCRAPING OF A CHAIR, WILDLY, IN THE DARK.
LOUISE GASPED... NO. NO, DON'T TURN ON THE LIGHTS, DON'T TURN ON THE LIGHTS, OH GOD, GOD, GOD, DON'T TURN THEM ON, PLEASE, PLEASE DON'T TURN ON THE LIGHTS, DON'T!

LOUISE WAS SHRIEKING NOW. THE ENTIRE CELLAR FROZE WITH THE SCREAM. NOBODY MOVED...

EVERYONE SAT SUSPENDED IN THE SUDDEN FROZEN TASK OF THIS OCTOBER GAME; THE WIND BLEW OUTSIDE BANGING THE HOUSE. THE SMELL OF PUMPKINS AND APPLES FILLED THE ROOM WITH THE SMELL OF THE OBJECTS IN THEIR FINGERS WHILE ONE BOY CRIED...
I'LL GO UPSTAIRS AND LOOK!

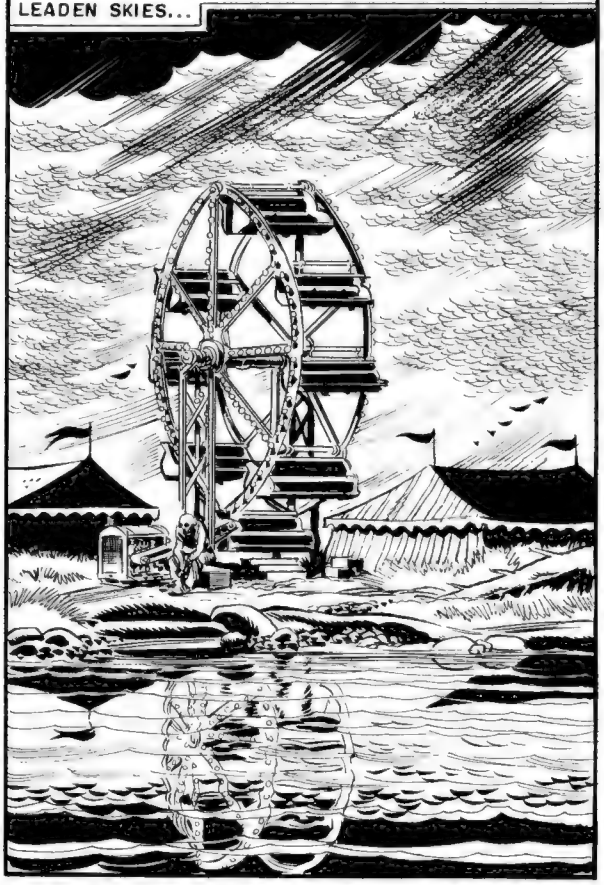


THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH! SO, NOW IT'S THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S TURN TO CHILL YOU. FOR THE WIND-UP SPOT TO O.W.'S MAG, I'VE CHOSEN A TALE BY *RAY BRADBURY.* SO COME INTO THE CRYPT OF TERROR, SIT DOWN ON THAT TENT SPIKE THERE, AND I'LL TELL YOU MY ADAPTATION OF MR. BRADBURY'S...

THE BLACK FERRIS!

THE CARNIVAL HAD COME TO TOWN LIKE AN OCTOBER WIND, LIKE A DARK BAT FLYING OVER A COLD LAKE, BONES RATTLING IN THE NIGHT, MOURNING, SIGHING, WHISPERING UP THE TENTS IN THE DARK RAIN. IT STAYED ON FOR A MONTH BY THE GREY, RESTLESS LAKE OF OCTOBER, IN THE BLACK WEATHER AND INCREASING STORMS AND LEADEN SKIES...



DURING THE THIRD WEEK, AT TWILIGHT ON A THURSDAY, TWO SMALL BOYS WALKED ALONG THE LAKE SHORE IN THE COLD WIND...

PETER AND HENRY RAN TO THE LONELY CARNIVAL GROUNDS. THE MIDWAY WAS SILENT. THE GREY TENTS HISSED IN THE WIND LIKE GIANT PREHISTORIC WINGS. AT EIGHT O'CLOCK PERHAPS, GHASTLY LIGHTS WOULD FLASH ON, VOICES WOULD SHOUT, MUSIC WOULD GO OUT OVER THE LAKE. BUT NOW, THERE WAS ONLY A BLIND HUNCHBACK SITTING ON A BLACK BOX...

THERE...

THE BLACK FERRIS WHEEL ROSE LIKE AN IMMENSE LIGHT-BULBED CONSTELLATION AGAINST THE CLOUDY SKY, SILENT...

I *STILL* DON'T BELIEVE WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT THAT FERRIS WHEEL, HANK.

YOU WAIT. I *SAW* IT HAPPEN. I DON'T KNOW *HOW*, BUT IT *DID*. YOU KNOW HOW *CARNIVALS* ARE... ALL *FUNNY*. OKAY. *THIS ONE'S EVEN FUNNIER.*

PETE LET HIMSELF BE LED TO THE HIGH GREEN HIDING PLACE OF A TREE. SUDDENLY HANK STIFFENED...

HIST! THERE'S MR. COOGER, THE CARNIVAL MAN, *NOW!*

MR. COOGER, A MAN OF SOME THIRTY-FIVE YEARS, DRESSED IN SHARP BRIGHT CLOTHES, A LAPEL CARNATION, AND A BROWN DERBY HAT ON HIS HEAD, DRIFTED UNDER THE TREE...

MR. COOGER NODDED AT THE BLIND HUNCHBACK, SPOKE A WORD. THE HUNCHBACK BLINDLY, FUMBLING, LOCKED MR. COOGER INTO A BLACK SEAT AND SENT HIM WHIRLING INTO THE OMINOUS TWILIGHT SKY...

SEE! THE FERRIS WHEEL'S GOING THE *WRONG WAY*... *BACKWARDS* INSTEAD OF *FORWARDS!*

SO WHAT?

THE BLACK FERRIS WHEEL WHIRLED TWENTY-FIVE TIMES AROUND. THEN THE BLIND HUNCHBACK PUT OUT HIS PALE HANDS AND HALTED THE MACHINERY. THE WHEEL STOPPED, GENTLY SWAYING, AT A CERTAIN BLACK SEAT. A TEN-YEAR OLD BOY STEPPED OUT...

THAT'S WHAT! YOU WOULDN'T *BELIEVE!* NOW... *SEE!*

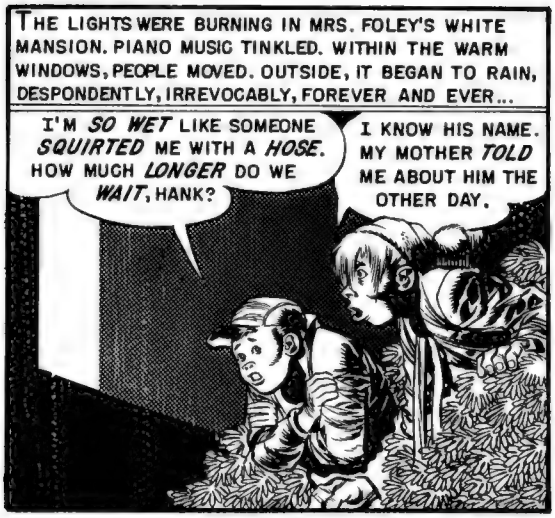
BUT... *WHERE'S MR. COOGER?*

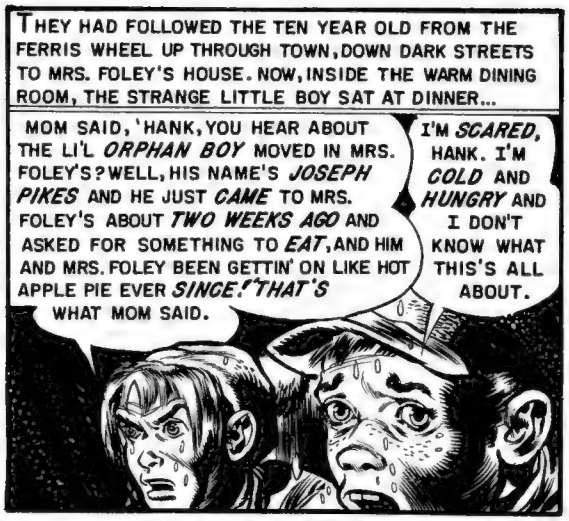
THE TEN YEAR OLD BOY WALKED OFF ACROSS THE WHISPERING CARNIVAL GROUNDS, INTO THE SHADOWS. PETER SEARCHED THE FERRIS WHEEL WITH HIS EYES FOR MR. COOGER...

WHERE *IS HE?*

THAT'S HIM! *COME ON! QUICK! RUN!*

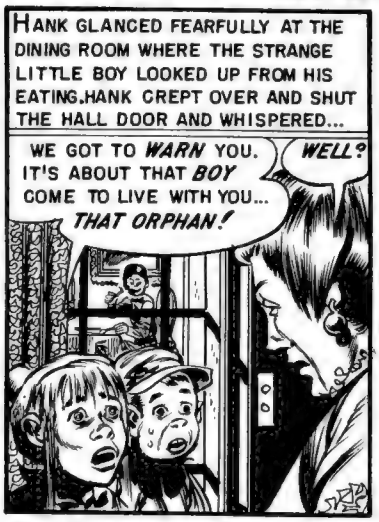
HANK DROPPED FROM THE TREE AND WAS SPRINTING BEFORE HE HIT THE GROUND...

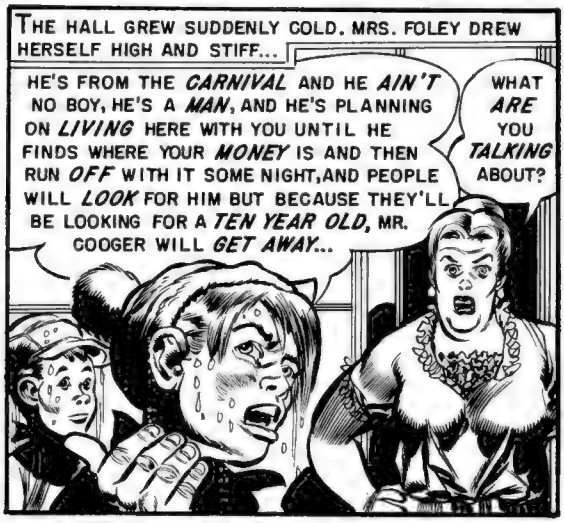

THE LIGHTS WERE BURNING IN MRS. FOLEY'S WHITE MANSION. PIANO MUSIC TINKLED. WITHIN THE WARM WINDOWS, PEOPLE MOVED. OUTSIDE, IT BEGAN TO RAIN, DESPONDENTLY, IRREVOCABLY, FOREVER AND EVER...
I'M SO WET LIKE SOMEONE SQUIRTED ME WITH A HOSE. HOW MUCH LONGER DO WE WAIT, HANK?
I KNOW HIS NAME. MY MOTHER TOLD ME ABOUT HIM THE OTHER DAY.


THEY HAD FOLLOWED THE TEN YEAR OLD FROM THE FERRIS WHEEL UP THROUGH TOWN, DOWN DARK STREETS TO MRS. FOLEY'S HOUSE. NOW, INSIDE THE WARM DINING ROOM, THE STRANGE LITTLE BOY SAT AT DINNER...
MOM SAID, 'HANK, YOU HEAR ABOUT THE LI'L ORPHAN BOY MOVED IN MRS. FOLEY'S? WELL, HIS NAME'S JOSEPH PIKES AND HE JUST CAME TO MRS. FOLEY'S ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO AND ASKED FOR SOMETHING TO EAT, AND HIM AND MRS. FOLEY BEEN GETTIN' ON LIKE HOT APPLE PIE EVER SINCE! THAT'S WHAT MOM SAID.
I'M SCARED, HANK. I'M COLD AND HUNGRY AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS'S ALL ABOUT.

GOSH, YOU'RE DUMB, PETE! DON'T YOU SEE? THREE WEEKS AGO THE CARNIVAL CAME, AND ABOUT THE SAME TIME THIS LITTLE OLE ORPHAN KID SHOWS UP AT MRS. FOLEY'S. AND MRS. FOLEY'S OWN SON DIED A LONG TIME AGO, AND SHE'S NEVER BEEN THE SAME, SO HERE'S THIS LITTLE OLE ORPHAN WHO BUTTERS HER ALL AROUND...
OH!

THEY MARCHED UP TO THE FRONT DOOR AND BANGED THE HUGE KNOCKER. AFTER AWHILE THE DOOR OPENED...
YOU'RE ALL WET! COME IN! MY LAND! WHAT DO YOU WANT? YOU'RE HENRY WALTERSON, AREN'T YOU?
UH-HUH! CAN WE SEE YOU... ALONE, MA'AM?


HANK GLANCED FEARFULLY AT THE DINING ROOM WHERE THE STRANGE LITTLE BOY LOOKED UP FROM HIS EATING. HANK CREPT OVER AND SHUT THE HALL DOOR AND WHISPERED...
WE GOT TO WARN YOU. IT'S ABOUT THAT BOY COME TO LIVE WITH YOU... THAT ORPHAN!
WELL?


THE HALL GREW SUDDENLY COLD. MRS. FOLEY DREW HERSELF HIGH AND STIFF...
HE'S FROM THE CARNIVAL AND HE AIN'T NO BOY, HE'S A MAN, AND HE'S PLANNING ON LIVING HERE WITH YOU UNTIL HE FINDS WHERE YOUR MONEY IS AND THEN RUN OFF WITH IT SOME NIGHT, AND PEOPLE WILL LOOK FOR HIM BUT BECAUSE THEY'LL BE LOOKING FOR A TEN YEAR OLD, MR. COOGER WILL GET AWAY...
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

THE CARNIVAL... AND THE FERRIS WHEEL GOING BACKWARD MAKING MR. COOGER YOUNGER, I DON'T KNOW HOW, AND HIM COMING HERE AS A BOY, AND YOU CAN'T TRUST HIM, BECAUSE WHEN HE HAS YOUR MONEY HE'LL GET BACK ON THE FERRIS WHEEL AND IT'LL GO FORWARD AND...
GET OUT, HENRY WALTERSON! GET OUT AND DON'T EVER COME BACK!
3

THE DOOR SLAMMED. PETER AND HANK FOUND THEMSELVES IN THE RAIN ONCE MORE. IT SOAKED INTO THEM, COLD AND COMPLETE...
SMART GUY! NOW YOU FIXED IT. SUPPOSE HE HEARD US, SUPPOSE HE COMES AND KILLS US IN OUR BEDS TONIGHT, TO SHUT US UP FOR KEEPS!
HE... HE WOULDN'T DO THAT.
PETER SEIZED HANK'S ARM AND POINTED...
WOULDN'T HE? LOOK!
IN THE BIG BAY WINDOW OF THE DINING ROOM NOW, THE MESH CURTAIN PULLED ASIDE. STANDING THERE IN THE PINK LIGHT, HIS HAND MADE INTO A MENACING FIST, WAS THE ORPHAN BOY. HIS FACE WAS HORRIBLE TO SEE, THE TEETH BARED, THE EYES HATEFUL...
DURING SUPPER, FATHER LOOKED AT HANK AND SAID...
IF YOU DON'T CATCH PNEUMONIA, I'LL BE SURPRISED. SOAKED, YOU WERE, BY GOD! WHAT'S ALL THIS ABOUT THE CARNIVAL?
DO YOU KNOW MR. COOGER, THE CARNIVAL MAN, DAD?
THE ONE WITH THE PINK CARNATION IN HIS LAPEL? SURE. HE STAYS DOWN AT MRS. O'LEARY'S BOARDING HOUSE. GOT A ROOM IN THE BACK. WHY?
NOTHING. JUST WAS WONDERING IF YOU KNEW HIM.
AFTER SUPPER, HANK PUT IN A CALL TO PETER. AT THE OTHER END OF THE LINE, PETER SOUNDED MISERABLE WITH COUGHING...
LISTEN, PETE! I SEE IT ALL NOW. WHEN THAT LI'L OLE ORPHAN BOY, JOSEPH PIKES, GETS MRS. FOLEY'S MONEY, HE'S GOT A GOOD PLAN.
WHAT?
HE'LL STICK AROUND TOWN AS THE CARNIVAL MAN, LIVING IN A ROOM AT MRS. O'LEARY'S. THAT WAY, NOBODY'LL GET SUSPICIOUS OF HIM. EVERYBODY'LL BE LOOKING FOR THAT NASTY LITTLE BOY AND HE'LL BE GONE. AND MR. COOGER WILL BE WALKING AROUND, AND NOBODY'LL SUSPECT THE CARNIVAL AT ALL. IT WOULD LOOK FUNNY IF THE CARNIVAL SUDDENLY PULLED UP STAKES. SO WE GOT TO ACT FAST.
NOBODY WILL BELIEVE US, HANK. I TRIED TO TELL MY FOLKS, BUT THEY SAID HOGWASH!
4

WE GOT TO ACT TONIGHT! BECAUSE IF WE DON'T, HE'LL KILL US! WE'RE THE ONLY ONES WHO KNOW! I BET HE JUST TRIES SOMETHING TONIGHT. SO, I TELL YOU, MEET ME AT MRS. FOLEY'S IN HALF AN HOUR.
AW!
YOU WANNA DIE?
N-NO!
WELL THEN, MEET ME THERE AND I BET WE SEE THAT ORPHAN BOY SNEAKING OUT WITH THE MONEY, TONIGHT, AND RUNNING BACK DOWN TO THE CARNIVAL GROUNDS WITH IT, WHEN MRS. FOLEY'S ASLEEP. I'LL SEE YOU THERE. SO LONG, PETE!
HANK HUNG UP. HIS FATHER STOOD BEHIND HIM...
YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE, YOUNG MAN. YOU'RE GOING STRAIGHT TO BED. C'MON! UPSTAIRS!
BUT, POP! AW.. GEE...
HANK WAS MARCHED UPSTAIRS. HANK UNDRESSED. HIS FATHER TOOK HIS CLOTHES AND LOCKED HIM IN HIS ROOM. THE REST OF HANK'S WARDROBE HUNG OUTSIDE THE LOCKED BEDROOM DOOR IN THE HALL CLOSET...
NOW, GO TO BED!
HOLY COW!
PETER STOOD OUTSIDE MRS. FOLEY'S HOUSE, LOST IN A VAST RAINCOAT AND MARINER'S CAP, SNIFFLING. FINALLY THERE WAS A RUSTLING IN THE WET BUSHES.
PSST! PETE! HEY! LEND ME YOUR PANTS! DAD WOULDN'T LET ME OUT!
GOSH, HANK! YOU'RE... YOU'RE NAKED!
C'MON! YOU'VE GOT THAT RAINCOAT ON. NOBODY'LL KNOW SO LEND ME YOUR PANTS, BEFORE I GET PNEUMONIA!
WELL... ALL RIGHT!
THE RELUCTANT TRANSACTION WAS MADE. HANK PULLED THE PANTS ON. THEY WAITED...
5

THE RAIN LET UP... IN ABOUT TEN MINUTES, A SMALL FIGURE EMERGED FROM THE HOUSE, BEARING A LARGE PAPER SACK FILLED WITH SOME ENORMOUS LOOT OR OTHER...

THERE HE GOES!

AFTER HIM!

THEY GAVE CHASE THROUGH THE CHESTNUT TREES, UP THE HILL, THROUGH THE NIGHT STREETS OF TOWN, DOWN PAST THE RAILROAD YARDS...

HURRY, PETE. WE *CAN'T* LET HIM GET TO THAT FERRIS WHEEL. IF HE CHANGES *BACK*, WE'LL NEVER *PROVE* ANYTHING...

I'M HURRYING!

THE ORPHAN BOY WAS SWIFT. PETER WAS LEFT BEHIND AS HANK THUDDED ON ALONE AFTER THE DARTING ORPHAN BOY, NOW VANISHING INTO THE CARNIVAL GROUNDS...

HANK STOPPED AT THE EDGE OF THE CARNIVAL LOT. THE FERRIS WHEEL WAS GOING UP AND UP INTO THE SKY, AND THERE SAT JOSEPH PIKES, LAUGHING UP AND AROUND, AND THE BLIND HUNCHBACK HAD HIS HAND ON THE ROARING OILY MACHINE. AND EACH TIME THAT JOSEPH PIKES RODE INTO THE SKY AND CAME DOWN AND WENT AROUND, HE WAS A YEAR OLDER, HIS LAUGH DEEPENING, HIS FACE CHANGING...

HAHA

HANK RAN FORWARD AT THE BLIND HUNCHBACK BY THE MACHINE. ON THE WAY, HE PICKED UP A TENT SPIKE...

WHO'S HERE? WHO...

OOOOOOF!

THE HUNCHBACK TRIED TO REACH THE BRAKE TO STOP THE FERRIS WHEEL. HANK RAN IN AND SLAMMED THE SPIKE AGAINST HIS FINGERS, MASHING THEM...

YAAAAAAAHHHH!

THE FERRIS WHEEL WENT AROUND AND AROUND AND AROUND. JOSEPH PIKES—MR. COOGER, FLUNG UP IN A STORMY COLD SKY IN THE BUBBLED CONSTELLATION OF WHIRL AND RUSH AND WIND, SCREAMED. THE HUNCHBACK WITH HANK ON HIS CHEST...THRASHING, BITING, KICKING... GROANED...

STOP THE WHEEL!

I CAN'T MOVE!

MR. COOGER, A MAN, A DIFFERENT MAN AND VOICE THIS TIME, CRIED OUT, COMING AROUND IN PANIC, GOING UP INTO THE ROARING, HISSING SKY OF THE FERRIS WHEEL. THE WIND BLEW THROUGH THE HIGH DARK WHEEL SPOKES...

STOP! OH, PLEASE STOP THE WHEEL!

HANK LEAPED FROM THE SPRAWLING HUNCHBACK. HE STARTED IN ON THE BRAKE MECHANISM, HITTING IT, JAMMING IT, PUTTING CHUNKS OF METAL IN IT...

STOP, STOP, STOP THE WHEEL! STOP...

THE VOICE FADED. NOW THE CARNIVAL WAS ABLAZE WITH SUDDEN LIGHT. MEN SPRANG FROM TENTS, CAME RUNNING. HANK FELT HIMSELF JERKED INTO THE AIR WITH OATHS AND BEATINGS RAINED ON HIM. A POLICEMAN APPEARED, PISTOL DRAWN...

STOP! STOP THE WHEEL!

THE VOICE REPEATED AND REPEATED, SIGHING AWAY IN THE WIND. THE DARK CARNIVAL MEN TRIED TO APPLY THE BRAKE. NOTHING HAPPENED. THE MACHINERY HUMMED AND TURNED THE WHEEL AROUND AND AROUND. THE MECHANISM WAS JAMMED. THE VOICE CRIED ONE LAST TIME.

STOP!

THEN... SILENCE...

WITHOUT A WORD, THE FERRIS WHEEL FLEW IN A CIRCLE, A HIGH SYSTEM OF ELECTRIC STARS AND METAL AND SEATS. THERE WAS NO SOUND NOW BUT THE SOUND OF THE MOTOR WHICH DIED AND STOPPED. THE FERRIS WHEEL COASTED A MINUTE, THEN CAME TO REST, ALL THE PEOPLE GAZING UP AT IT...

LOOK!

THE POLICEMAN TURNED AND THE CARNIVAL PEOPLE TURNED AND THEY ALL LOOKED AT THE OCCUPANT IN THE BLACK PAINTED SEAT AT THE BOTTOM OF THE RIDE. A SKELETON SAT THERE, A PAPER BAG OF MONEY IN ITS HANDS, A BROWN DERBY HAT ON ITS HEAD...

GOOD LORD! CHOKE...

HEH, HEH! AND THAT'S THE STORY, KIDDIES, THE WAY RAY WROTE IT. HOPE YOU LIKED IT. NOW IT'S TIME TO CLOSE *THE OLD WITCH'S MAG.* BEFORE YOU CREEP FROM THE *CRYPT,* LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT THE *HUNGRY GHOUL.* HE LEFT *NO STONE UNTURNED!* HEH, HEH! WELL, WE'LL *ALL* SEE YOU NEXT IN *MY* MAG, *TALES FROM THE CRYPT.* THERE'LL BE ANOTHER *RAY BRADBURY* YARN FOR YOUR ENJOYMENT. 'BYE, NOW! BUY BOMBS!

– THE END – (7)

SURPRISE PACKAGE

BY EIGHT O'CLOCK SHE HAD PLACED THE CIGARETTES AND THE SILVER BUCKET OF THIN SHAVED ICE PACKED AROUND THE GREEN BOTTLE. SHE STOOD LOOKING AT THE ROOM, EACH PICTURE NEAT, ASHTRAYS CONVENIENTLY DISPOSED. THEN SHE HURRIED INTO THE BATHROOM AND RETURNED WITH THE STRYCHNINE BOTTLE. SHE HAD ALREADY HIDDEN A HAMMER AND A GUN. HE WAS IN THE ELEVATOR NOW, FLOATING UP THE IRON THROAT OF THE HOUSE. AND SHE WAS READY...

ADAPTED FROM A STORY BY
RAY BRADBURY

SHE OPENED THE DOOR TO HIS RAP. HE WAS A HANDSOME MAN OF FIFTY, STILL ABLE TO VISIT HANDSOME WOMEN OF THIRTY-THREE...FRESH, CONVIVIAL, READY FOR THE WINE AND THE REST OF IT...

SHE KISSED HIM QUIETLY, THINKING TO HERSELF...

IS THIS DIFFERENT FROM LAST WEEK, LAST MONTH, LAST YEAR? WHAT MAKES ME SUSPICIOUS? SOME LITTLE THING. SOMETHING I CAN'T EVEN TELL, IT'S SO MINOR. HE'S CHANGED... SUBTLY AND DRASTICALLY...

HE HELD HER AWAY AND SURVEYED HER CRITICALLY...
NOT MUCH RESPONSE. IS THERE ANYTHING... WRONG, MARTHA?
NOTHING, LEONARD...
LEONARD GLANCED DOWN. MARTHA WAS LOST IN THOUGHT...
WHERE ARE YOU TONIGHT, LEONARD? WHO ARE YOU DANCING WITH... OR DRINKING WITH? WHO ARE YOU BEING LOVABLY POLITE WITH?
HELLO. WHAT'S THIS? A HAMMER? HAVE YOU BEEN HANGING PICTURES, MARTHA?
SHE LAUGHED...
NO, DEAR. I'M GOING TO HIT YOU WITH IT.
HEH, HEH. WELL, PERHAPS THIS WILL MAKE YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND...
HE DREW FORTH A PLUSH CASE, INSIDE WHICH WAS A PEARL NECKLACE. HE SLIPPED IT AROUND HER NECK...
OH, LEONARD! YOU ARE GOOD TO ME.
IT'S NOTHING... NOTHING AT ALL.
AT THESE TIMES, SHE ALMOST FORGOT HER SUSPICIONS. SHE HAD EVERYTHING WITH HIM, DIDN'T SHE? THERE WAS NO SIGN OF HIS LOSING INTEREST. HE WAS JUST AS KIND AND GENTLE AND GENEROUS. YET, WHY DID SHE FEEL SO LONELY WITH HIM? PERHAPS IT HAD STARTED WITH THAT PICTURE IN THE PAPER TWO MONTHS AGO. A PICTURE OF HIM AND ALICE SUMMERS IN THE CLUB ON THE NIGHT OF APRIL SEVENTEENTH...
LEONARD, YOU DIDN'T TELL ME YOU TOOK ALICE SUMMERS TO THE CLUB LAST MONTH ON THE SEVENTEENTH.
DIDN'T I, MARTHA? WELL, I DID!
BUT WASN'T THAT ONE OF THE NIGHTS YOU WERE HERE... WITH ME?
I DON'T SEE HOW IT COULD HAVE BEEN. I WAS WITH ALICE. WE HAD SUPPER AND PLAYED SYMPHONIES UNTIL EARLY MORNING.
I'M SURE YOU WERE HERE WITH ME APRIL SEVENTEENTH, LEONARD.
I'M SURE I WASN'T, MY DEAR. I MIGHT HAVE BEEN HERE THE NIGHT BEFORE OR THE NIGHT AFTER. NOW, COME ON... HOW ABOUT SOME WINE?
2

IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE, OF COURSE. HE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN IN TWO PLACES AT THE SAME TIME. AND YET...
NO, LEONARD. NO WINE YET. FIRST... KISS ME.
OF COURSE, DARLING...
THEY KISSED. THERE IT WAS. THE DIFFERENCE. THE LITTLE CHANGE. THERE WAS A SUBTLE CHEMICAL DIFFERENCE TO HIS KISS. IT WAS NO LONGER THE KISS OF MR. LEONARD HILL...
THERE. AND NOW THE WINE...
OH, WILL YOU GET SOME PLACE-MATS FROM THE KITCHEN TO SET THE DRINKS ON, DEAR?
SHE POURED THE STRYCHNINE INTO HIS GLASS WHILE HE WAS GONE...
GOOD LORD... WHAT IF I'M WRONG? WHAT IF THIS IS REALLY HIM? WHAT IF I'M JUST SOME WILD PARANOID SORT OF CREATURE, REALLY INSANE AND NOT AWARE OF IT?
HE RETURNED WITH THE PLACE-MATS AND PICKED UP HIS DRINK. SHE RAISED HER GLASS IN TOAST. HE DRAINED HIS AT A GULP, AS ALWAYS...
MY GOD, THAT'S HORRIBLE STUFF. WHERE'D YOU GET IT?
OH, I'M SORRY YOU DON'T LIKE IT, DEAR. I HAVE ANOTHER BOTTLE IN THE REFRIGERATOR. I'LL GET IT...
WHEN SHE BROUGHT THE NEW BOTTLE IN, HE WAS STILL SITTING THERE, CLEVER AND ALIVE AND FRESH. SHE WAITED FOR HIM TO FALL SIDEWAYS AND STARE THE STARE OF THE DEAD...
YOU... LOOK WONDERFUL.
FEEL FINE, TOO. YOU'RE... BEAUTIFUL. I THINK I LOVE YOU MORE TONIGHT THAN EVER.
AN HOUR PASSED AND HE WAS STILL TELLING WITTY LITTLE STORIES AND HOLDING HER HAND AND KISSING HER GENTLY NOW AND AGAIN. HE WAS STILL ALIVE...
YOU SEEM QUIET TONIGHT, MARTHA. ANYTHING WRONG?
NO, DEAR...
SHE'D SEEN THE NEWS ITEM LAST WEEK, THE ITEM THAT HAD SET HER WORRYING AND PLANNING, THAT HAD EXPLAINED HER LONLINESS IN HIS PRESENCE. ABOUT THE MARIONETTES. MARIONETTES, INCORPORATED. THERE WAS A RUMOR. POLICE WERE INVESTIGATING...
THERE YOU GO AGAIN... WANDERING OFF. WHAT'S IN THAT PRETTY HEAD OF YOURS?
YOUR... MOUTH! IT TASTES FUNNY!
3

LIFE-SIZE MARIONETTES. MECHANICAL, STRINGLESS, SECRETIVE DUPLICATES OF REAL PEOPLE. ONE COULD BE MEASURED FOR A REPLICA OF ONE'S SELF. ONE COULD SEND THE REPLICA OUT TO WINE, TO DINE, TO ENTERTAIN THOSE ONE WAS WEARY OF...
DOES IT? I'M SORRY. I'LL HAVE TO SEE TO THAT, EH?
IT'S TASTED FUNNY FOR SOME TIME...
OF COURSE IT HAD NOT BEEN PROVEN THAT MARIONETTES EXISTED... JUST A SLY, TERRIFYING RUMOR. SHE FELT HER HEART BEATING QUICKLY AND SHE WAS COLD. IT WAS HIS MOUTH. AFTER ALL, NO MATTER HOW PERFECT CHEMISTS WERE, THEY COULDN'T REPRODUCE THE EXACT TASTE. TASTE WAS INDIVIDUAL. THERE WAS WHERE THEY'D FALLEN DOWN. SHE REACHED AND DREW THE GUN FROM THE COUCH...
WHAT'S THIS? OH, MY GOD. HOW DRAMATIC, MARTHA...
I'VE CAUGHT ON TO YOU. YOU'VE BEEN LYING TO ME. YOU HAVEN'T BEEN HERE IN EIGHT WEEKS OR MORE!
IS THAT POSSIBLE? WHERE HAVE I BEEN, THEN?
WITH ALICE SUMMERS. AND I'LL BET YOU'RE IN HER APARTMENT RIGHT NOW.
MY DEAR MARTHA. WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN READING?
ABOUT THE MARIONETTES!
THAT POPPYCOCK? GOOD GOD, I AM ASHAMED OF YOU. IT'S NOT TRUE. I LOOKED INTO IT!
YOU...YOU... WHAT?!
OF COURSE! I HAVE SO MANY SOCIAL OBLIGATIONS. AND THEN MY FIRST WIFE CAME BACK, AS YOU KNOW, AND DEMANDED MY TIME, AND I THOUGHT HOW FINE IT WOULD BE IF I HAD A REPLICA OF MYSELF MADE. AS BAIT, YOU MIGHT SAY, TO TURN MY WIFE OFF MY TRAIL. HOW NICE, EH? BUT IT'S ALL FALSE!
JUST ONE OF THOSE FANTASTIC RUMORS! I ASSURE YOU! NOW PUT DOWN THAT GUN AND COME HAVE ANOTHER GLASS OF WINE!
WAIT A MINUTE. YOU CAN'T TALK ME OUT OF THIS. I GAVE YOU ENOUGH POISON A WHILE AGO TO KILL SIX MEN. THAT PROVES SOMETHING, DOESN'T IT?
IT PROVES, MY DEAR, THAT YOUR CHEMIST GAVE YOU THE WRONG BOTTLE. PUT DOWN THAT GUN AND BE SENSIBLE, MARTHA!
4

MARTHA MOVED TOWARD THE PHONE. SHE PICKED UP THE RECEIVER AND LAID IT ON THE TABLE, THEN BEGAN TO DIAL A NUMBER...
I JUST WANT TO BE CERTAIN, LEONARD. I'M CALLING ALICE SUMMERS' APARTMENT.
MARTHA, DON'T...
THE PHONE RANG AND RANG AT THE OTHER END. FINALLY A VOICE ANSWERED. MARTHA LISTENED FOR A MOMENT, THEN HUNG UP...
THERE! ARE YOU SATISFIED?
YES...
HER MOUTH WAS THICK. SHE RAISED THE GUN. HE STOOD UP, SCREAMING...
DON'T...
THAT WAS YOUR VOICE ON THE OTHER END. YOU'RE WITH HER... RIGHT NOW.
YOU'RE INSANE! MARTHA, DON'T, IT'S A MISTAKE, THAT WAS SOMEONE ELSE, YOU'RE SO OVERWROUGHT YOU THOUGHT IT SOUNDED LIKE ME, YOU...
SHE FIRED THE GUN ONCE...TWICE...THREE TIMES...
HE FELL TO THE FLOOR. SHE CAME TO STAND OVER HIM. SHE WAS AFRAID AND SHE BEGAN TO CRY. SHE HAD IMAGINED THAT A MARIONETTE WOULD ONLY STAND THERE AND LAUGH AT HER, ALIVE, IMMORTAL. SHE THOUGHT TO HERSELF...
I WAS WRONG! THIS IS LEONARD HILL. AND I'VE KILLED HIM... I AM INSANE.
MARTHA, WHY DIDN'T YOU LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE? OH, MARTHA...
I'LL CALL A DOCTOR!
NO, NO! YOU'VE GOT TO KNOW SOMETIME. AND NOW THAT YOU'VE DONE THIS, YOU FOOL, I MAY AS WELL ADMIT IT. I... I HAVEN'T BEEN HERE WITH YOU FOR A... FOR A YEAR!
THE GUN FELL FROM HER FINGERS...
YOU'RE... LYING!
A YEAR! TWELVE MONTHS! YES, MARTHA, TWELVE MONTHS!
5

OH, YOU WON'T BELIEVE ME NOW, WILL YOU? WHAT'S CHANGED YOU IN TEN SECONDS? DO YOU THINK I'M LEONARD HILL NOW? FORGET IT!
THEN THAT WAS YOU? AT ALICE SUMMERS' APARTMENT JUST NOW?
ME? NO! I STARTED WITH ALICE A YEAR AGO, WHEN I FIRST LEFT YOU!
LEFT ME?
YES, LEFT YOU. I'M AN OLD MAN, MARTHA, OLD AND TIRED. THE RAT RACE WAS TOO MUCH FOR ME. I THOUGHT I NEEDED A CHANGE SO I WENT ON TO ALICE AND TIRED OF HER. AND WENT ON TO HELEN KINGSLEY AND TIRED OF HER. AND ON TO ANN MONTGOMERY. AND THAT DIDN'T LAST. OH, MARTHA. THERE ARE AT LEAST SIX DUPLICATES OF ME TICKING AWAY TONIGHT...
...SIX MECHANICAL HYPOCRITES IN ALL PARTS OF TOWN, KEEPING SIX WOMEN HAPPY. AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT I'M DOING? THE REAL I? THE REAL LEONARD HILL? I'M HOME IN BED EARLY FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THIRTY YEARS READING AND DRINKING HOT MILK AND TURNING OUT THE LIGHTS AT TEN O'CLOCK!
STOP!
I'VE GOT TO TELL YOU, MARTHA. YOU CUT SEVERAL VITAL ELEMENTS WITH YOUR BULLETS. I CAN'T GET UP. THE DOCTORS, IF THEY CAME, WOULD FIND ME OUT ANYWAY, I'M NOT THAT PERFECT!
OH, MARTHA, I DIDN'T WANT TO HURT YOU. BELIEVE ME. I WANTED ONLY YOUR HAPPINESS. I SPENT FIFTEEN THOUSAND DOLLARS FOR THIS REPLICA, PERFECT IN EVERY DETAIL.
THERE ARE VARIABLES. THE SALIVA FOR ONE. A REGRETTABLE ERROR. IT SET YOU OFF. BUT YOU MUST KNOW THAT I LOVED YOU...
6

SHE WOULD FALL AT ANY MOMENT, WRITHING INTO INSANITY, SHE THOUGHT. HE *HAD* TO BE STOPPED FROM *TALKING*...

AND WHEN I SAW HOW THE *OTHERS* LOVED ME, I HAD TO PROVIDE REPLICAS FOR *THEM*, POOR DEARS. THEY *LOVE* ME *SO!* YOU WON'T *TELL* THEM, *WILL* YOU, MARTHA? *PROMISE?* I'M A VERY TIRED OLD MAN, AND I WANT MY PEACE, A BOOK, SOME MILK, AND A LOT OF *SLEEP*...

ALL THIS YEAR, THIS *WHOLE YEAR*, I'VE BEEN *ALONE*... ALONE *EVERY NIGHT!* TALKING TO A *MECHANICAL HORROR!* IN *LOVE* WITH *NOTHINGNESS*. *ALONE ALL THE TIME* WHEN I COULD HAVE BEEN OUT WITH SOMEONE *REAL*...

I CAN *STILL* LOVE YOU, MARTHA.

OH, GOD...

SHE SEIZED UP THE HAMMER...

SHE SMASHED AT HIS HEAD AND BEAT AT HIS CHEST AND HIS THRASHING ARMS AND WILD LEGS. SHE BEAT AT THE SOFT HEAD UNTIL STEEL SHONE THROUGH, AND SUDDEN EXPLOSIONS OF WIRE AND BRASS COGGERY SHOWERED ABOUT THE ROOM WITH METAL TINKLES. THE MOUTH SAID...

I... LOVE YOU...

SHE STRUCK THE MOUTH WITH THE HAMMER AND THE TONGUE FELL OUT. THE GLASS EYES ROLLED ON THE CARPET. SHE POUNDED AT THE THING UNTIL IT WAS STREWN LIKE THE REMAINS OF A CHILD'S ELECTRIC TRAIN ON THE FLOOR...

IN THE KITCHEN, SHE FOUND SEVERAL CARTONS. SHE LOADED THE COGS AND WIRES AND METAL INTO THESE AND SEALED THE TOPS. TEN MINUTES LATER THE MESSENGER BOY ARRIVED...

DELIVER THESE PACKAGES TO *MR. LEONARD HILL*, 17 ELM DRIVE. *RIGHT NOW, TONIGHT.* TELL HIM IT'S A *SURPRISE PACKAGE*... FROM *MARTHA!*

A *SURPRISE PACKAGE* FROM *MARTHA.* YES MA'AM!

AFTER THE DOOR CLOSED, SHE SAT ON THE COUCH WITH THE GUN IN HER HAND, TURNING IT OVER AND OVER, LISTENING. THE LAST THING SHE HEARD IN HER LIFE WAS THE SOUND OF THE PACKAGES BEING CARRIED DOWN THE HALL, THE METAL JINGLING SOFTLY, COG AGAINST COG, WIRE AGAINST WIRE, FADING...

THE END 7

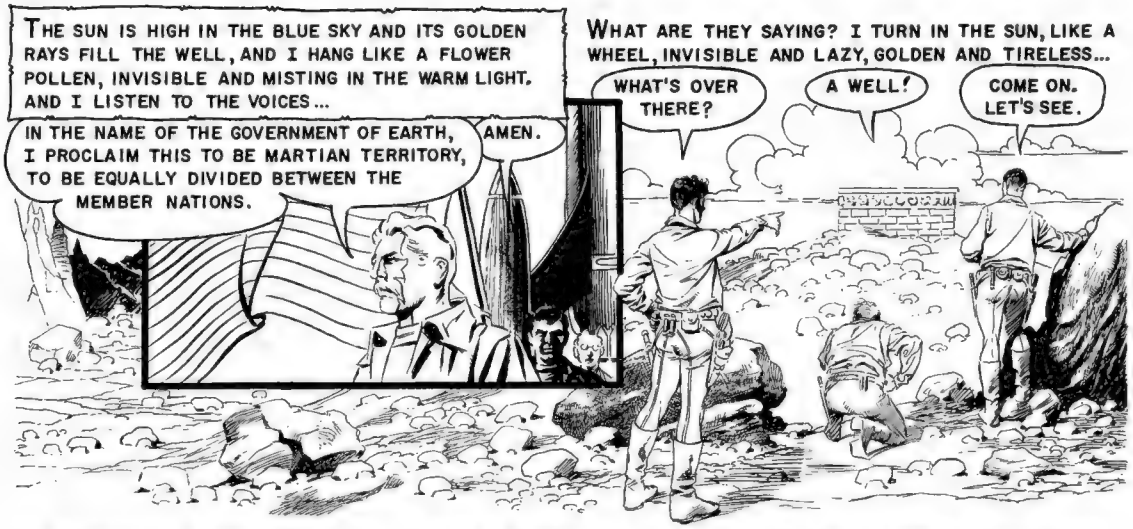
THE ONE WHO WAITS

I LIVE IN A WELL. I LIVE LIKE SMOKE IN THE WELL. LIKE VAPOR IN A STONE THROAT. I DON'T MOVE. I DON'T DO ANYTHING BUT WAIT. OVERHEAD, I SEE THE COLD STARS OF NIGHT AND MORNING, AND I SEE THE SUN. AND SOMETIMES I SING OLD SONGS OF THIS WORLD WHEN IT WAS YOUNG. HOW CAN I TELL YOU WHAT I AM WHEN I DON'T KNOW? I CANNOT. I AM SIMPLY WAITING. I AM MIST AND MOONLIGHT AND MEMORY. I AM SAD AND I AM OLD. I WAIT IN THE COOL SILENCE, AND THERE WILL COME A DAY WHEN I NO LONGER WAIT...

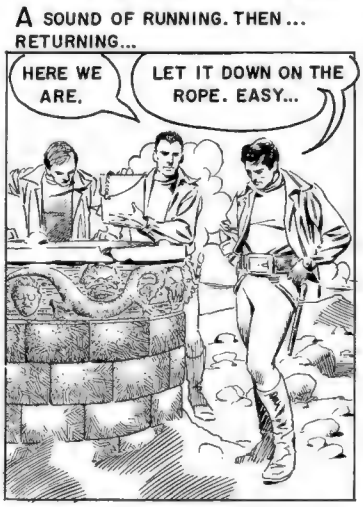
ADAPTED FROM A TALE BY RAY BRADBURY

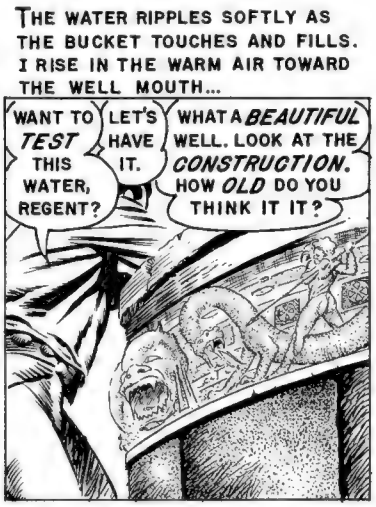
NOW IT IS MORNING. I HEAR A GREAT THUNDER. I SMELL RED FIRE FROM A DISTANCE. I HEAR METAL CRASHING...

I WAIT. I LISTEN. I HEAR VOICES, FAR AWAY. ALIEN VOICES. THEY SPEAK AN ALIEN TONGUE I CANNOT KNOW. NO WORD IS FAMILIAR. I LISTEN...

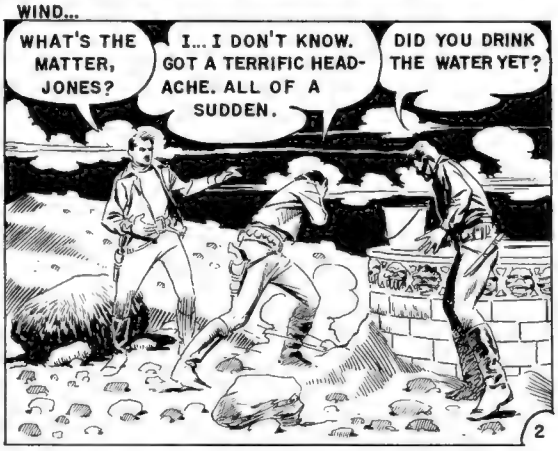

THE SUN IS HIGH IN THE BLUE SKY AND ITS GOLDEN RAYS FILL THE WELL, AND I HANG LIKE A FLOWER POLLEN, INVISIBLE AND MISTING IN THE WARM LIGHT. AND I LISTEN TO THE VOICES...
IN THE NAME OF THE GOVERNMENT OF EARTH, I PROCLAIM THIS TO BE MARTIAN TERRITORY, TO BE EQUALLY DIVIDED BETWEEN THE MEMBER NATIONS.
AMEN.
WHAT ARE THEY SAYING? I TURN IN THE SUN, LIKE A WHEEL, INVISIBLE AND LAZY, GOLDEN AND TIRELESS...
WHAT'S OVER THERE?
A WELL!
COME ON. LET'S SEE.

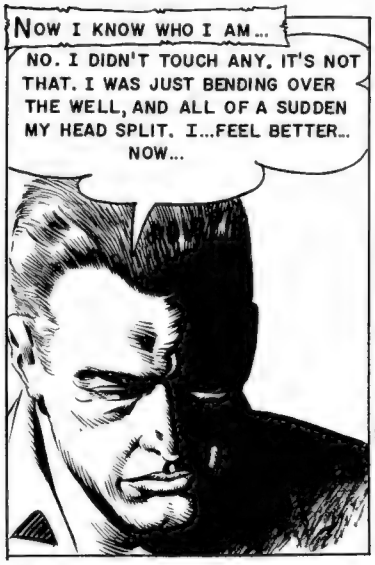
THE APPROACH OF WARMTH. THREE OBJECTS BEND OVER THE WELL MOUTH AND MY COOLNESS RISES TO THE OBJECTS...
THINK IT'S GOOD WATER?
WE'LL SEE. SOMEONE GET A BUCKET.
I WILL!

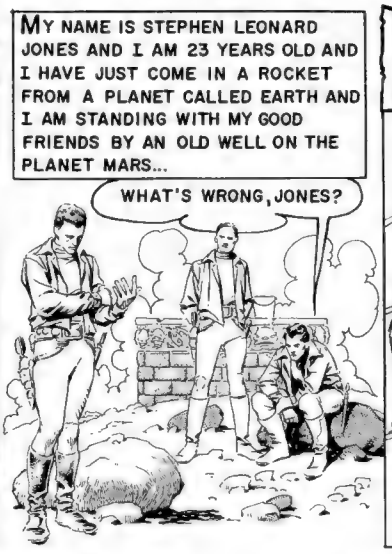

A SOUND OF RUNNING. THEN... RETURNING...
HERE WE ARE.
LET IT DOWN ON THE ROPE. EASY...

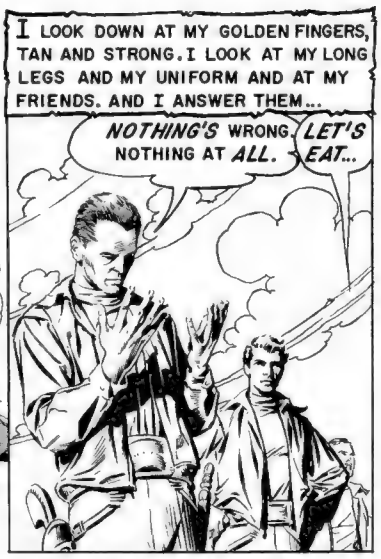

THE WATER RIPPLES SOFTLY AS THE BUCKET TOUCHES AND FILLS. I RISE IN THE WARM AIR TOWARD THE WELL MOUTH...
WANT TO TEST THIS WATER, REGENT?
LET'S HAVE IT.
WHAT A BEAUTIFUL WELL. LOOK AT THE CONSTRUCTION. HOW OLD DO YOU THINK IT IT?

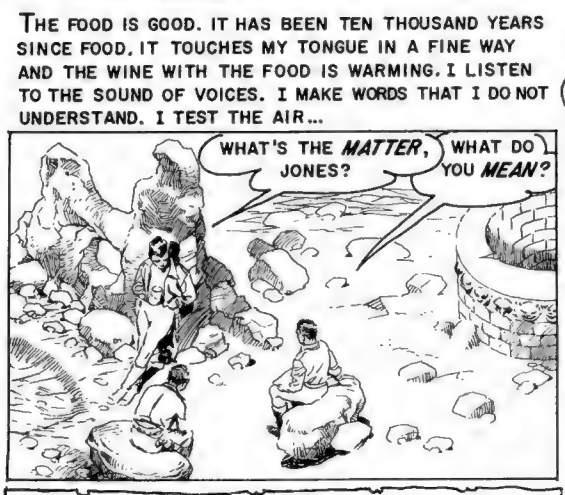
GOD KNOWS. WHEN WE LANDED IN THAT TOWN YESTERDAY, COLE SAID THERE HASN'T BEEN LIFE ON MARS IN TEN THOUSAND YEARS.
IMAGINE! HOW IS IT, REGENT? THE WATER.
PURE AS SILVER. HAVE SOME...


THE SOUND OF WATER IN THE HOT SUNLIGHT. NOW I HOVER LIKE A DUST, A CINNAMON, UPON THE SOFT WIND...
WHAT'S THE MATTER, JONES?
I... I DON'T KNOW. GOT A TERRIFIC HEADACHE. ALL OF A SUDDEN.
DID YOU DRINK THE WATER YET?
2

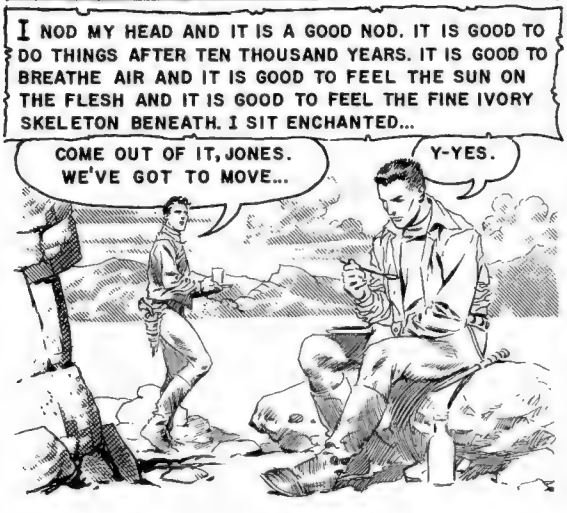

NOW I KNOW WHO I AM...
NO. I DIDN'T TOUCH ANY. IT'S NOT THAT. I WAS JUST BENDING OVER THE WELL, AND ALL OF A SUDDEN MY HEAD SPLIT. I...FEEL BETTER... NOW...

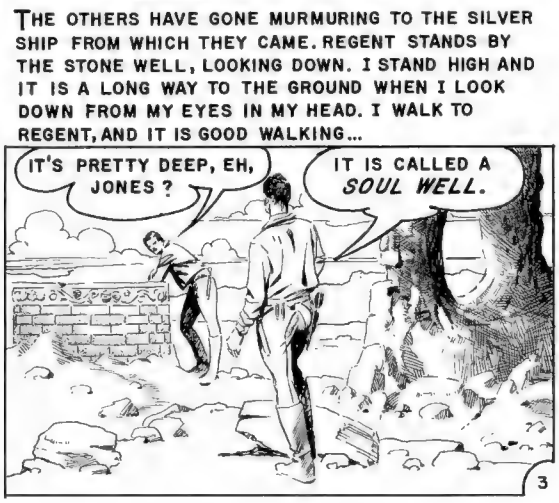

MY NAME IS STEPHEN LEONARD JONES AND I AM 23 YEARS OLD AND I HAVE JUST COME IN A ROCKET FROM A PLANET CALLED EARTH AND I AM STANDING WITH MY GOOD FRIENDS BY AN OLD WELL ON THE PLANET MARS...
WHAT'S WRONG, JONES?


I LOOK DOWN AT MY GOLDEN FINGERS, TAN AND STRONG. I LOOK AT MY LONG LEGS AND MY UNIFORM AND AT MY FRIENDS. AND I ANSWER THEM...
NOTHING'S WRONG. NOTHING AT ALL.
LET'S EAT...


THE FOOD IS GOOD. IT HAS BEEN TEN THOUSAND YEARS SINCE FOOD. IT TOUCHES MY TONGUE IN A FINE WAY AND THE WINE WITH THE FOOD IS WARMING. I LISTEN TO THE SOUND OF VOICES. I MAKE WORDS THAT I DO NOT UNDERSTAND. I TEST THE AIR...
WHAT'S THE MATTER, JONES?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I TILT MY HEAD AND REST MY HANDS HOLDING THE SILVER UTENSILS OF EATING. I FEEL EVERYTHING...
YOU KEEP BREATHING FUNNY. COUGHING...
MAYBE A LITTLE COLD COMING ON.
CHECK WITH THE DOC LATER, JONES!


I NOD MY HEAD AND IT IS A GOOD NOD. IT IS GOOD TO DO THINGS AFTER TEN THOUSAND YEARS. IT IS GOOD TO BREATHE AIR AND IT IS GOOD TO FEEL THE SUN ON THE FLESH AND IT IS GOOD TO FEEL THE FINE IVORY SKELETON BENEATH. I SIT ENCHANTED...
COME OUT OF IT, JONES. WE'VE GOT TO MOVE...
Y-YES.


THE OTHERS HAVE GONE MURMURING TO THE SILVER SHIP FROM WHICH THEY CAME. REGENT STANDS BY THE STONE WELL, LOOKING DOWN. I STAND HIGH AND IT IS A LONG WAY TO THE GROUND WHEN I LOOK DOWN FROM MY EYES IN MY HEAD. I WALK TO REGENT, AND IT IS GOOD WALKING...
IT'S PRETTY DEEP, EH, JONES?
IT IS CALLED A SOUL WELL.
3

REGENT RAISES HIS HEAD AND LOOKS AT ME...

HOW DO *YOU* KNOW *THAT?* A *SOUL WELL?* I NEVER *HEARD* OF A *SOUL WELL*...
IT IS A PLACE WHERE *WAITING THINGS*...THINGS THAT ONCE HAD *FLESH*... *WAIT* AND *WAIT*...

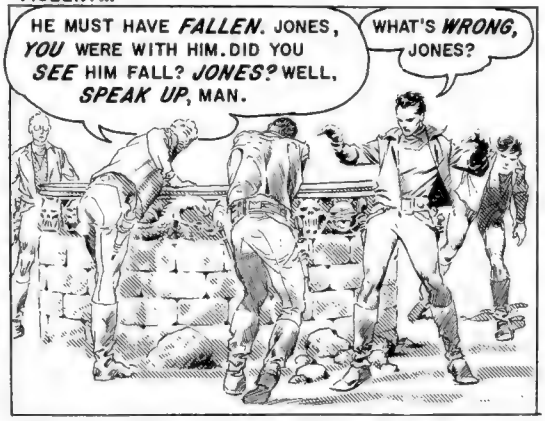
AND AS I SAY THAT, I REACH OUT AND TOUCH REGENT'S ARM...

THE SAND IS FIRE AND THE SHIP IS SILVER FIRE AND THE HEAT IS GOOD TO FEEL. I SMELL THE ROCKET BOILING IN THE HOTNESS OF THE DAY. I STAND BELOW THE PORT...

ONE OF THEM RUNS TOWARD THE WELL. I BEGIN TO TREMBLE...A FINE SHIVERING TREMBLE, HIDDEN DEEP, BUT BECOMING VERY STRONG. AND FOR THE FIRST TIME I HEAR IT, AS IF IT, TOO, WERE HIDDEN IN A WELL. A VOICE CALLING WITHIN ME, TINY AND AFRAID...

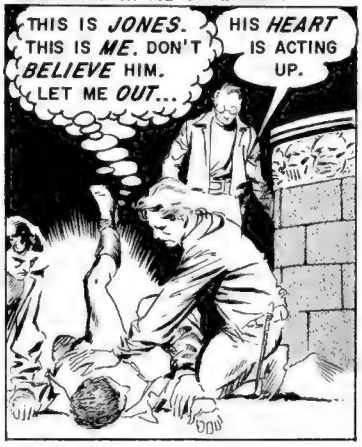
AND THERE IS A FEELING WITHIN ME AS IF SOMETHING IS TRYING TO GET FREE...A POUNDING ON DOORS, A RUSHING DOWN DARK CORRIDORS AND UP PASSAGES, ECHOING AND SCREAMING...

THE MEN ARE RUNNING, ALL FIVE OF THEM. I RUN WITH THEM BUT NOW I AM SICK AND THE TREMBLING IS VIOLENT...

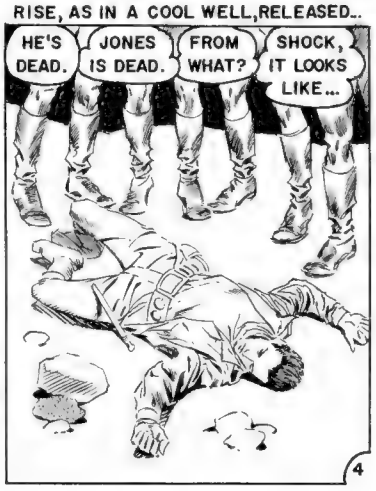


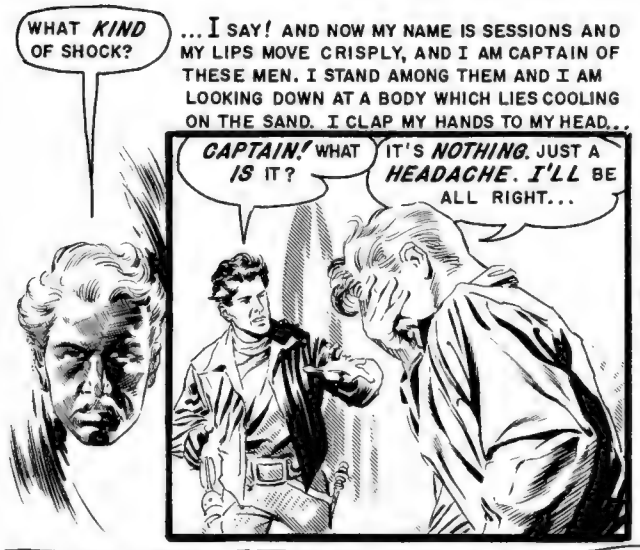
I FALL TO MY KNEES, THE TREMBLING IS SO BAD...

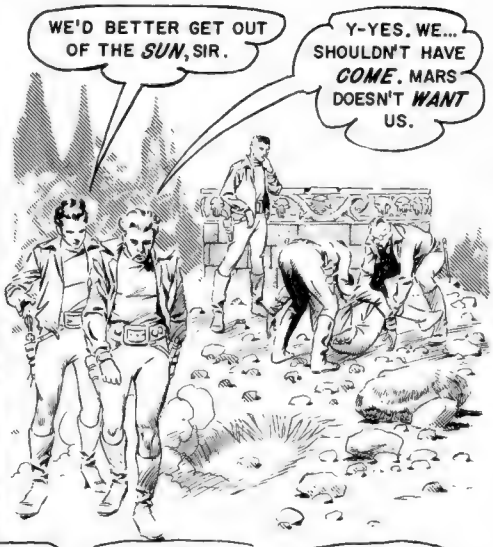
THEY STRETCH ME OUT AND THE SEIZURES COME AND GO LIKE EARTHQUAKES AND THE DEEP HIDDEN VOICE IN ME SCREAMS...

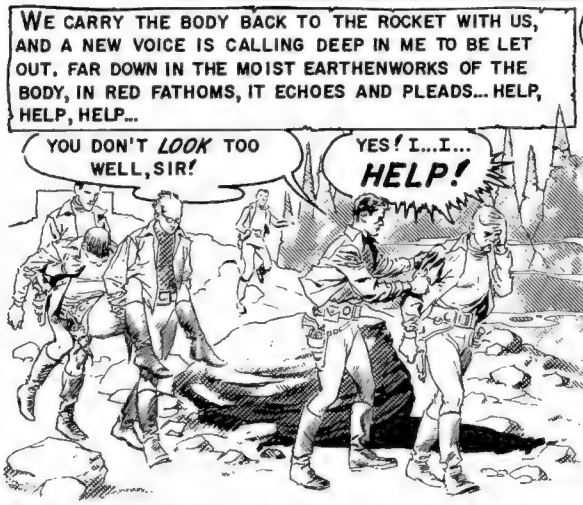


I CLOSE MY EYES. THE SCREAMING STOPS. THE SHIVERINGS CEASE. I RISE, AS IN A COOL WELL, RELEASED..

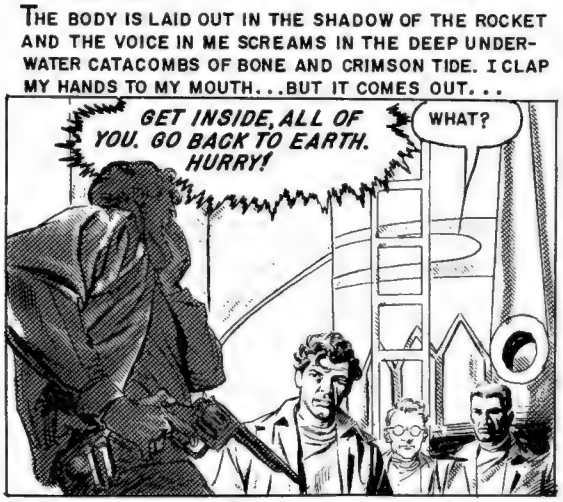


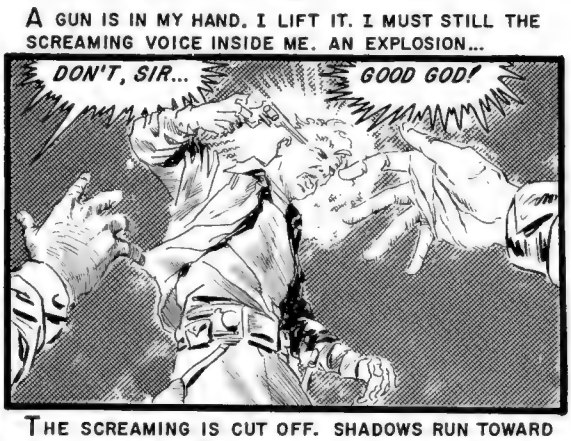

WHAT *KIND* OF SHOCK?
...I SAY! AND NOW MY NAME IS SESSIONS AND MY LIPS MOVE CRISPLY, AND I AM CAPTAIN OF THESE MEN. I STAND AMONG THEM AND I AM LOOKING DOWN AT A BODY WHICH LIES COOLING ON THE SAND. I CLAP MY HANDS TO MY HEAD...
CAPTAIN! WHAT *IS* IT?
IT'S *NOTHING*. JUST A *HEADACHE*. *I'LL* BE ALL RIGHT...


WE'D BETTER GET OUT OF THE *SUN*, SIR.
Y-YES. WE... SHOULDN'T HAVE *COME*. MARS DOESN'T *WANT* US.


WE CARRY THE BODY BACK TO THE ROCKET WITH US, AND A NEW VOICE IS CALLING DEEP IN ME TO BE LET OUT. FAR DOWN IN THE MOIST EARTHENWORKS OF THE BODY, IN RED FATHOMS, IT ECHOES AND PLEADS... HELP, HELP, HELP...
YOU DON'T *LOOK* TOO WELL, SIR!
YES! I...I... *HELP!*

WHAT, SIR?
I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING.
YOU SAID '*HELP*,' SIR.


THE BODY IS LAID OUT IN THE SHADOW OF THE ROCKET AND THE VOICE IN ME SCREAMS IN THE DEEP UNDER-WATER CATACOMBS OF BONE AND CRIMSON TIDE. I CLAP MY HANDS TO MY MOUTH...BUT IT COMES OUT...
GET INSIDE, ALL OF YOU. GO BACK TO EARTH. HURRY!
WHAT?


A GUN IS IN MY HAND. I LIFT IT. I MUST STILL THE SCREAMING VOICE INSIDE ME. AN EXPLOSION...
DON'T, SIR...
GOOD GOD!
THE SCREAMING IS CUT OFF. SHADOWS RUN TOWARD ME. I DROP TO THE SAND. HOW GOOD IT FEELS TO DIE.

5

I OPEN MY EYES AND THERE IS THE CAPTAIN LYING ON THE RED SAND, HIS SKULL SPLIT BY A BULLET, HIS EYES WIDE, HIS TONGUE PROTRUDING BETWEEN HIS WHITE TEETH. AND I CRY OUT...

GOOD GOD, HE KILLED HIMSELF!

I BEND TO TOUCH HIM. THE MEN ARE HORRIFIED. THEY STAND OVER THE TWO DEAD MEN AND TURN THEIR HEADS TO SEE THE DISTANT WELL WHERE REGENT LIES LOLLING IN DEEP WATERS. AND I SAY...

THE *FOOL!* WHY DID HE DO THAT?

A CROAKING COMES OUT OF THEIR DRY LIPS...A WHIMPERING...A CHILDISH PROTEST AGAINST THIS AWFUL DREAM. THE MEN TURN TO ME AND ONE OF THEM SAYS...

THAT MAKES *YOU* CAPTAIN, MATHEWS.

I KNOW...

ONLY *FOUR* OF US LEFT *NOW.*

GOOD GOD, IT ALL HAPPENED SO *QUICK.*

I DON'T WANT TO *STAY* HERE. LET'S *GET OUT!*

THE MEN CLAMOR. I GO TO THEM AND TOUCH THEM WITH A CONFIDENCE THAT ALMOST SINGS IN ME...

LISTEN TO ME. WAIT...

I TOUCH THEIR SHOULDERS AND THEIR ARMS AND THEIR HANDS AND WE ALL FALL SILENT. FOR WE ARE ONE...

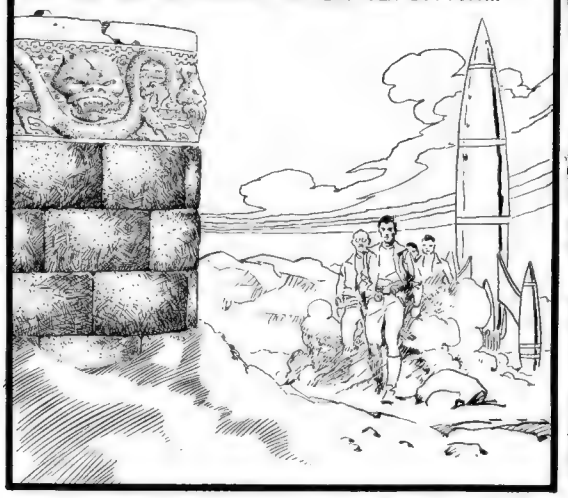
LISTEN...

NO! NO! INNER VOICES, CRYING, DEEP DOWN INSIDE US... UNHEARD. WE ARE SAMUEL MATHEWS AND WILLIAM SPAULDING AND FORREST COLE AND JOHN SUMMERS, AND WE SAY NOTHING BUT LOOK UPON EACH OTHER WITH OUR WHITE FACES AND SHAKING HANDS... AND WE SAY...

NOW...

6

NO, NO, NO! FOUR VOICES SCREAM, HIDDEN AND LAYERED DOWN AND STORED FOREVER. OUR FEET WALK IN THE SAND AND IT IS AS IF A GREAT HAND WITH EIGHT FINGERS WAS MOVING ACROSS THE DEAD SEA BOTTOM...



WE BEND TO THE WELL, LOOKING DOWN. FROM THE COOL DEPTHS, FOUR FACES PEER BACK UP AT US...

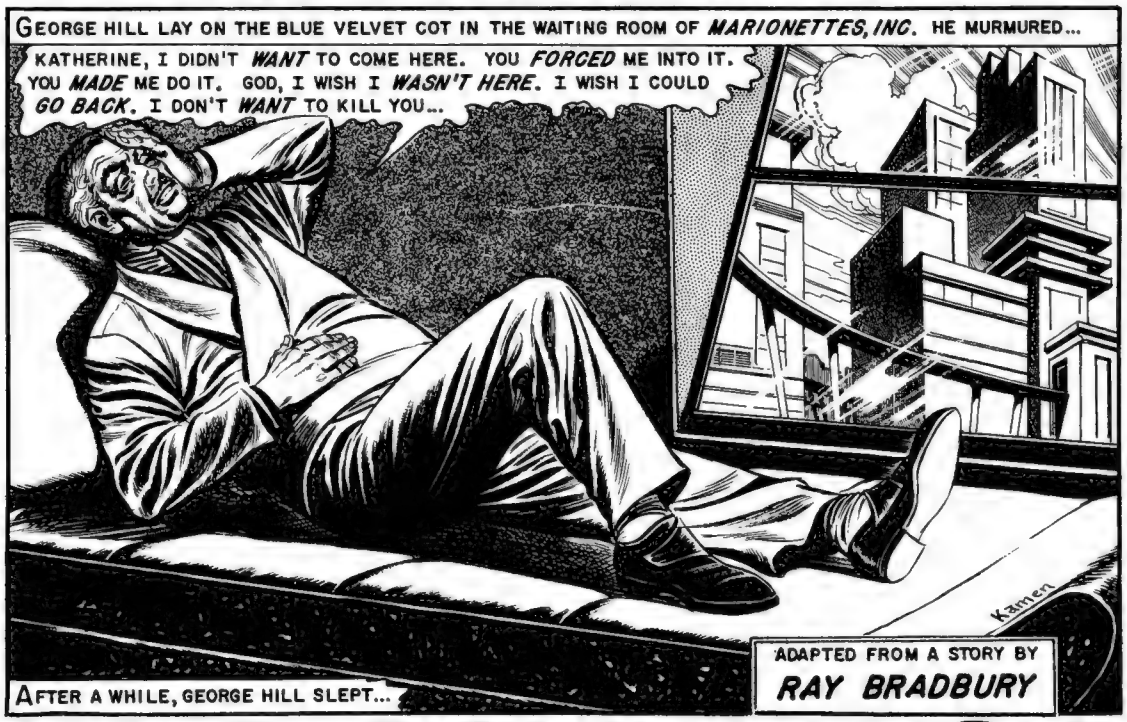
ONE BY ONE WE BEND UNTIL OUR BALANCES ARE GONE, AND ONE BY ONE DROP INTO THE MOUTH AND DOWN THROUGH COOL DARKNESS INTO COLD WATERS...

THE SUN SETS. THE STARS WHEEL UPON THE NIGHT SKY. FAR OUT THERE IS A WINK OF LIGHT. ANOTHER ROCKET IS COMING, LEAVING RED MARKS IN SPACE...

I LIVE IN A WELL. I LIVE LIKE SMOKE IN A WELL. LIKE VAPOR IN A STONE THROAT. OVERHEAD, I SEE THE COLD STARS OF NIGHT AND MORNING, AND I SEE THE SUN. AND SOMETIMES I SING OLD SONGS OF THIS WORLD WHEN IT WAS YOUNG. HOW CAN I TELL YOU WHAT I AM WHEN I DO NOT KNOW. I CANNOT...

I AM SIMPLY WAITING... THE END

PUNISHMENT WITHOUT CRIME


GEORGE HILL LAY ON THE BLUE VELVET COT IN THE WAITING ROOM OF *MARIONETTES, INC.* HE MURMURED...
KATHERINE, I DIDN'T *WANT* TO COME HERE. YOU *FORCED* ME INTO IT. YOU *MADE* ME DO IT. GOD, I WISH I *WASN'T HERE*. I WISH I COULD *GO BACK*. I DON'T *WANT* TO KILL YOU...
Kamen
ADAPTED FROM A STORY BY
RAY BRADBURY
AFTER A WHILE, GEORGE HILL SLEPT...

HE DREAMED HE WAS FORTY-ONE AGAIN, HE AND KATIE SITTING ON A GREEN HILL SOMEWHERE WITH A PICNIC LUNCH, THEIR HELICOPTER BESIDE THEM. THE WIND BLEW KATIE'S HAIR IN GOLDEN STRANDS AND SHE WAS LAUGHING...
...THEY KISSED AND HELD HANDS, NOT EATING...

OTHER SCENES. QUICK CHANGES OF COLOR. GREECE, ITALY, SWITZERLAND, IN THAT CLEAR, LONG AUTUMN OF 1997. AND THEN... *NIGHTMARE*. KATIE AND LEONARD PHELPS...
GASP...
KATIE AND LEONARD IN A GREEN PARK OUTSIDE THE CITY. GEORGE HIMSELF APPEARING ON A PATH IN TIME TO SEE...

GEORGE CRIED OUT IN HIS SLEEP. HOW HAD IT *HAPPENED?* WHERE HAD PHELPS SPRUNG FROM? WHY HAD HE INTERFERED? THE *RAGE*. THE *STRUGGLE*. THE ATTEMPT TO *KILL* LEONARD PHELPS...

GEORGE HILL AWOKE, WEEPING. HE ROSE CLUMSILY. HE SAW HIMSELF IN THE WAITING-ROOM MIRROR, AND HE LOOKED ALL FIFTY OF HIS YEARS. IT HAD BEEN A WRETCHED ERROR. BETTER MEN THAN HE HAD TAKEN YOUNG WIVES ONLY TO HAVE THEM DISSOLVE AWAY LIKE SUGAR CRYSTALS IN WATER. HE EYED HIMSELF, MONSTROUSLY. A LITTLE TOO MUCH STOMACH. A LITTLE TOO MUCH CHIN ...

THE DARK MAN LED HIM TO A ROOM...

WHY, THIS IS *KATIE'S* ROOM.
WE TRY TO HAVE EVERYTHING *PERFECT*, MR. HILL. YOU *STILL* WANT TO GO *THROUGH* WITH IT? YOU *KNOW* THIS IS *ILLEGAL*...

...THAT WE ARE IN *NO WAY RESPONSIBLE* FOR WHAT *HAPPENS* TO YOU AS A *RESULT* OF THIS REQUEST.
YES. *YES!* FOR *GOD'S SAKE!* YOU'VE KEPT ME *LONG ENOUGH!* LET'S GET *ON* WITH IT!

GEORGE DREW FORTH A SIGNED CHECK FOR TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS. THE DARK MAN HANDED HIM A RELEASE...

GEORGE SIGNED. THE MAN DEPARTED...

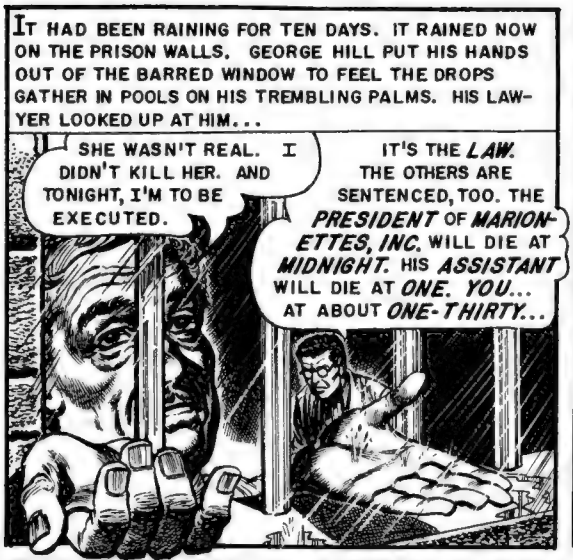
THE ROOM WAS SILENT. GEORGE FELT FOR THE GUN IN HIS POCKET. A LOT OF MONEY. BUT RICH MEN CAN *AFFORD* THE LUXURY OF *CATHARTIC MURDER*. THE *VIOLENT UNVIOLENCE*. THE *DEATH* WITHOUT *DEATH*. THE *MURDER* WITHOUT *MURDERING*. HE WAS SUDDENLY CALM...

HE WATCHED THE DOOR. THIS WAS A THING HE HAD ANTICIPATED FOR SIX MONTHS, AND NOW IT WAS TO BE ENDED. IN A MOMENT, THE BEAUTIFUL *ROBOT*, THE *STRINGLESS MARIONETTE*, THE *REPLICA* OF *KATIE* WOULD APPEAR, AND...

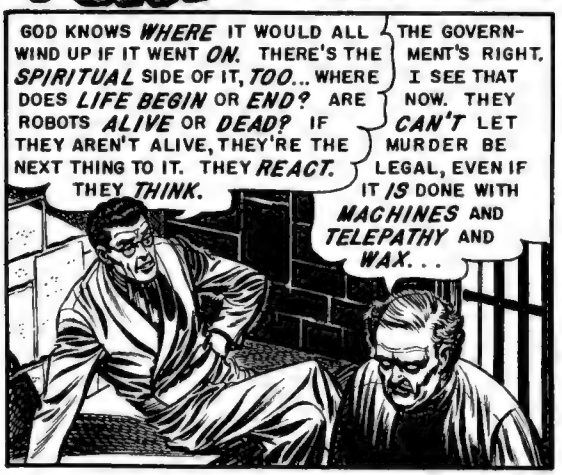
HE WHIRLED. HE LET OUT HIS BREATH. SHE STOOD BEHIND HIM. SHE WAS DRESSED IN A FEATHER-SOFT GREEN GOWN. HER HAIR WAS BRIGHT ABOUT HER THROAT AND HER EYES WERE BLUE AND CLEAR...
YOU'RE... BEAUTIFUL!
HOW ELSE COULD I BE, GEORGE?
HIS VOICE WAS SLOW AND UNREAL. HIS HEART POUNDED SLUGGISHLY. HE MOVED FORWARD AS IF WALKING UNDER A DEEP PRESSURE OF WATER.
LET ME LOOK AT YOU.
HAVEN'T YOU SEEN ENOUGH OF ME IN ALL THESE YEARS?
HE WALKED AROUND AND AROUND HER, TOUCHING HER. HIS EYES FILLED WITH TEARS...
NEVER ENOUGH...
WHAT DID YOU WANT TO TALK TO ME ABOUT, GEORGE?
HE SAT DOWN WEAKLY. HE BLINKED...
IT'S INCREDIBLE. HOW DID THEY MAKE YOU? IT'S MAGIC!
SCIENCE. BUT WE'RE NOT ALLOWED TO TALK OF THAT. IT SPOILS THE ILLUSION. COME TO BUSINESS...
HER FINGERNAILS WERE PERFECT AS SEASHELLS. THERE WERE NO SEAMS, NO FLAWS. HE LOOKED UPON HER. HE WANTED TO KISS HER LIPS...
GIVE ME TIME. I'LL GET TO IT!
YOU WANTED TO TALK TO ME ABOUT LEONARD, DIDN'T YOU, GEORGE? YOU KNOW I SPEND ALL MY TIME WITH HIM NOW.
HE KNEW NO ANGER. IT HAD WASHED OUT OF HIM AT HER APPEARANCE. HE FELT CHILDISHLY DIRTY...
YOU'RE NOT GUILTY. YOU'RE NOT. YOU'RE FRESH. YOU'RE NOT HER. SHE'S GUILTY! NOT YOU! YOU'RE DIFFERENT!
ON THE CONTRARY! I AM HER. I CAN ACT ONLY AS SHE ACTS. NO PART OF ME IS ALIEN TO HER. I DID ALL THOSE THINGS. I KISSED HIM. I...
NO! YOU CAN'T HAVE. YOU'RE JUST BORN. LOOK, ISN'T THERE SOME WAY? CAN'T I... PAY MORE MONEY? TAKE YOU AWAY WITH ME? I DON'T WANT TO KILL YOU!
I'M GOING TO SEE LEONARD TONIGHT, GEORGE. WE'RE FLYING TO PARIS IN THE MORNING. AND THEN TO STOCKHOLM. MY LITTLE FAT MAN...
3

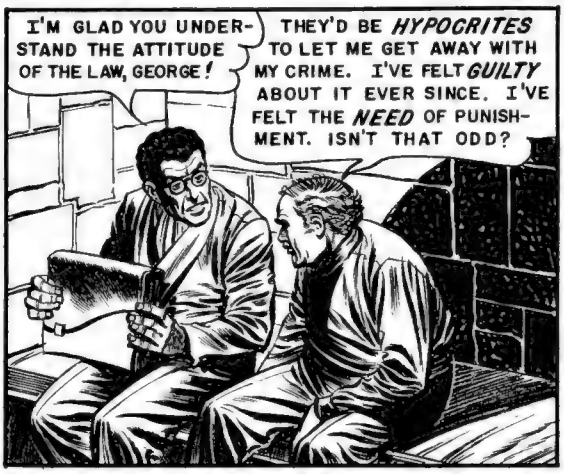
SOMETHING BEGAN TO STIR IN HIM. HIS FACE GREW PALE. HE KNEW WHAT WAS HAPPENING. THE HIDDEN ANGER AND REVULSION AND HATRED IN HIM WAS SENDING OUT THOUGHT IMPULSES. THE MARIONETTE. THE INVISIBLE STRINGS. HE WAS MANIPULATING HER BODY. THE DELICATE TELEPATHIC WEB IN HER WONDROUS HEAD WAS RECEIVING HIS DEATH THOUGHTS...
PLUMP, ODD LITTLE MAN WHO ONCE WAS SO FAIR.
DON'T, KATIE! DON'T!
OLD, WHILE I AM ONLY TWENTY-SEVEN. AH, GEORGE, YOU WERE BLIND... WORKING ALL THESE YEARS TO GIVE ME TIME TO FALL IN LOVE AGAIN. DON'T YOU THINK LEONARD IS LOVELY?
STOP IT, KATIE. FOR GOD'S SAKE.
HE DREW THE GUN.
SHE KEPT AT HIM...
I LOVE HIM, GEORGE. I LOVE HIM...
KATIE... DON'T...
HE RAISED THE GUN BLINDLY...
I LOVE HIM...
KATIE...
HE FIRED. SHE FELL...
I LOVE HIM...
KATIE, KATIE, KATIE...
FOUR TIMES HE PUMPED BULLETS INTO HER BODY...
I.... LOVE... HIM... I... LOVE ...HIM...
NO! NO!
SHE LAY SHUDDERING. HER SENSELESS MOUTH CLICKED WIDE AND SOME INSANELY WARPED MECHANISM HAD HER REPEAT IT AGAIN AND AGAIN...
GEORGE HILL DROPPED TO THE FLOOR. THE LAST THING HE REMEMBERED WAS FEELING THE REAL BLOOD POURING UPON HIS HANDS IN A FRESHET...
KATIE...SOB...KATIE...
AND THEN HE FAINTED...
4

HE AWAKENED TO A COOL CLOTH ON HIS BROW. THE DARK MAN STOOD OVER HIM, CLEANING THE BLOOD FROM HIS HANDS...
IT'S ALL OVER, MR. HILL!
OVER?
GEORGE GOT UP. HE STARED AT HIS WASHED HANDS THAT HAD BEEN COVERED WITH BLOOD...
I'VE GOT TO LEAVE. I'LL GO TO PARIS NOW...START OVER. I'M NOT TO TRY TO PHONE KATIE OR ANYTHING, AM I?
KATIE IS DEAD.
YES. I KILLED HER, DIDN'T I? GOD! THE BLOOD! IT WAS REAL!
WE ARE PROUD OF THAT TOUCH...
THE ANGER AND THE DESTRUCTION WERE PURGED AWAY. THE MEMORY WAS SO TERRIBLE THAT HE WOULD NEVER KILL AGAIN. SHE WAS DEAD NOW. HE HAD HAD HIS WAY. HE WENT DOWN IN THE ELEVATOR AND OUT INTO THE STREET...
IT WAS RAINING.
HE STOPPED AT THE CURB AND WATCHED THE TRAFFIC FLASH BY. HE TOOK DEEP BREATHS OF THE GOOD AIR AND BEGAN TO RELAX...
MR. HILL?
YES?
A HANDCUFF WAS SNAPPED ON GEORGE HILL'S WRIST...
YOU'RE UNDER ARREST, MR. HILL. ALL RIGHT, SMITH. GO UPSTAIRS AND GET THE OTHERS...
BUT, YOU CAN'T DO THIS TO ME!
FOR MURDER, MR. HILL?! OH, YES WE CAN!
THUNDER SOUNDED IN THE SKY...
5


IT HAD BEEN RAINING FOR TEN DAYS. IT RAINED NOW ON THE PRISON WALLS. GEORGE HILL PUT HIS HANDS OUT OF THE BARRED WINDOW TO FEEL THE DROPS GATHER IN POOLS ON HIS TREMBLING PALMS. HIS LAWYER LOOKED UP AT HIM...
SHE WASN'T REAL. I DIDN'T KILL HER. AND TONIGHT, I'M TO BE EXECUTED.
IT'S THE LAW. THE OTHERS ARE SENTENCED, TOO. THE PRESIDENT OF MARIONETTES, INC. WILL DIE AT MIDNIGHT. HIS ASSISTANT WILL DIE AT ONE. YOU... AT ABOUT ONE-THIRTY...

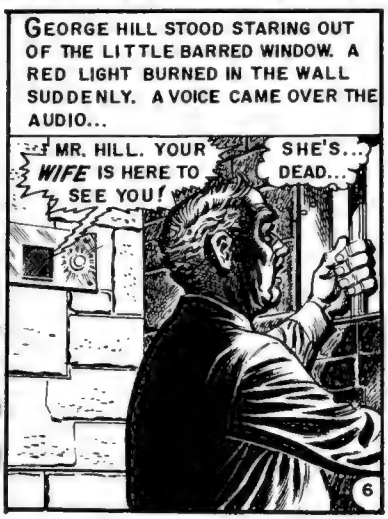
GEORGE HILL TURNED, LISTENING TO THE RAIN...
THANKS. YOU DID ALL YOU COULD. I GUESS IT WAS MURDER, NO MATTER HOW YOU LOOK AT IT. THE IDEA WAS THERE... THE PLOT AND THE PLAN. IT LACKED ONLY THE REAL KATIE HERSELF.
TEN YEARS AGO, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE RECEIVED THE DEATH PENALTY. MAYBE TEN YEARS FROM NOW YOU WOULDN'T EITHER. BUT THE USE OF MARIONETTES HAS GROWN SO IN THE LAST YEAR, THEY HAD TO HAVE A WHIPPING BOY TO SCARE THE PUBLIC OUT OF IT!


GOD KNOWS WHERE IT WOULD ALL WIND UP IF IT WENT ON. THERE'S THE SPIRITUAL SIDE OF IT, TOO... WHERE DOES LIFE BEGIN OR END? ARE ROBOTS ALIVE OR DEAD? IF THEY AREN'T ALIVE, THEY'RE THE NEXT THING TO IT. THEY REACT. THEY THINK.
THE GOVERNMENT'S RIGHT. I SEE THAT NOW. THEY CAN'T LET MURDER BE LEGAL, EVEN IF IT IS DONE WITH MACHINES AND TELEPATHY AND WAX...


I'M GLAD YOU UNDERSTAND THE ATTITUDE OF THE LAW, GEORGE!
THEY'D BE HYPOCRITES TO LET ME GET AWAY WITH MY CRIME. I'VE FELT GUILTY ABOUT IT EVER SINCE. I'VE FELT THE NEED OF PUNISHMENT. ISN'T THAT ODD?

I HAVE TO GO NOW, GEORGE.
THAT'S HOW SOCIETY GETS TO YOU. IT MAKES YOU FEEL GUILTY EVEN WHEN YOU SEE NO REASON TO BE...

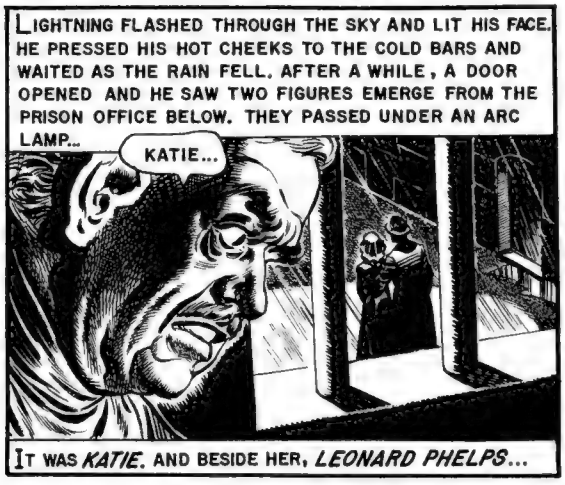
GOODBYE, GEORGE.
GOODBYE...
THE LAWYER LEFT...


GEORGE HILL STOOD STARING OUT OF THE LITTLE BARRED WINDOW. A RED LIGHT BURNED IN THE WALL SUDDENLY. A VOICE CAME OVER THE AUDIO...
MR. HILL. YOUR WIFE IS HERE TO SEE YOU!
SHE'S... DEAD...
6

MR. HILL. YOUR WIFE IS WAITING IN THE ANTEROOM. WILL YOU SEE HER?
SHE'S DEAD. I KILLED HER. I SHOT HER. I SAW HER FALL...

MR. HILL. DO YOU HEAR ME? YOUR WIFE...
I HEAR YOU! I HEAR YOU! SHE'S DEAD... SHE'S DEAD, CAN'T SHE LET ME BE? I KILLED HER, I WON'T SEE HER, SHE'S DEAD!

GEORGE POUNDED AT THE WALL OF HIS CELL WITH HIS FISTS. A PAUSE... THEN...
VERY WELL, MR. HILL!
THE RED LIGHT WINKED OFF...


LIGHTNING FLASHED THROUGH THE SKY AND LIT HIS FACE. HE PRESSED HIS HOT CHEEKS TO THE COLD BARS AND WAITED AS THE RAIN FELL. AFTER A WHILE, A DOOR OPENED AND HE SAW TWO FIGURES EMERGE FROM THE PRISON OFFICE BELOW. THEY PASSED UNDER AN ARC LAMP...
KATIE...
IT WAS KATIE. AND BESIDE HER, LEONARD PHELPS...

HER FACE TURNED AWAY. THE MAN TOOK HER ARM. THEY HURRIED AWAY IN THE BLACK RAIN... INTO A WAITING CAR...
KATIE! KATIE! SHE'S ALIVE! GUARD! GUARD! I SAW HER! SHE'S NOT DEAD, I DIDN'T KILL HER, NOW YOU CAN LET ME OUT...

HE SCREAMED AND BEAT AND PULLED AT THE BARS. THE GUARDS CAME RUNNING...
I DIDN'T MURDER ANYONE, IT'S ALL A JOKE, A MISTAKE, I SAW HER, I SAW HER. KATIE, COME BACK, TELL THEM, KATIE, SAY YOU'RE ALIVE, KATIE... I SAW HER...
WE SAW HER TOO, MR. HILL.

THEN LET ME FREE! LET ME FREE! THIS IS INSANE...
WE'VE BEEN THROUGH ALL THAT, SIR... AT THE TRIAL...!
HE LEAPED UP AND CLAWED AT THE BARS, BELLOWING...

THE CAR DROVE AWAY, KATIE AND LEONARD INSIDE... DROVE AWAY TO PARIS AND ATHENS AND LONDON NEXT SPRING AND VIENNA IN THE FALL...
KATIE! COME BACK! YOU CAN'T DO THIS TO ME!
BEHIND HIM, THE GUARDS MOVED FORWARD TO TAKE HOLD OF GEORGE HILL WHILE HE SCREAMED.

THE SCREAMING WOMAN!

MY NAME IS *MARGARET LEARY* AND I'M *TEN* YEARS OLD AND IN THE FIFTH GRADE AT CENTRAL SCHOOL! I HAVEN'T ANY *BROTHERS* OR *SISTERS*, BUT I'VE GOT A NICE FATHER AND MOTHER EXCEPT THEY DON'T PAY MUCH *ATTENTION!* I GOT TO TELL YOU HOW IT *HAPPENED!* IT WAS A NOON IN THE MIDDLE OF JULY! IT WAS HOT AND MAMA HAD SENT ME FOR ICE CREAM! I RAN OUT ACROSS THE EMPTY LOT BEHIND MY HOUSE! IT WAS A BIG LOT, WHERE KIDS HAD PLAYED BASEBALL, AND HAD BROKEN GLASS AND STUFF! AND ON MY WAY BACK FROM THE STORE WITH THE ICE CREAM I WAS JUST WALKING ALONG, MINDING MY OWN BUSINESS, WHEN ALL OF A SUDDEN...

ADAPTED FROM A STORY BY
RAY BRADBURY

I HEARD THE *SCREAMING WOMAN!* IT WAS COMING UP OUT OF THE GROUND! A WOMAN WAS BURIED UNDER THE ROCKS AND DIRT AND GLASS, AND SHE WAS SCREAMING ALL WILD AND HORRIBLE, FOR SOMEONE TO DIG HER OUT...

I JUST STOOD THERE, AFRAID! SHE KEPT SCREAMING, MUFFLED! THEN I STARTED TO RUN! I FELL DOWN, GOT UP, AND RAN SOME MORE! I GOT IN THE SCREEN DOOR AND THERE WAS MAMA, CALM AS YOU PLEASE, NOT *KNOWING* WHAT *I* KNEW...

MAMA! THERE'S A *REAL LIVE WOMAN BURIED OUT IN BACK OF OUR HOUSE*, JUST A *HUNDRED YARDS AWAY*... SCREAMING *BLOODY MURDER! MAMA*...
DON'T *STAND* THERE WITH THE ICE CREAM! PUT IT IN THE *ICEBOX!*

LISTEN, MAMA! THERE'S A SCREAMING WOMAN IN THE EMPTY LOT! SHE WAS SCREAMIN' AND SCREAMIN'...
...AND WASH YOUR HANDS! LET'S SEE NOW... SALT... PEPPER...
WE GOT TO DIG HER OUT! SHE'S BURIED UNDER TONS AND TONS OF DIRT AND IF WE DON'T DIG HER OUT, SHE'LL CHOKE UP AND DIE...
I'M CERTAIN SHE CAN WAIT UNTIL AFTER LUNCH!
MAMA! DON'T YOU BELIEVE ME? WE'VE GOT TO HELP HER...
OF COURSE, DEAR! NOW WASH YOUR HANDS AND TAKE THIS PLATE OF MEAT IN TO YOUR FATHER!
DADDY! DADDY! THERE'S A SCREAMING WOMAN IN THE EMPTY LOT!
I NEVER KNEW A WOMAN WHO DIDN'T!
SHE'S BURIED! WE'VE GOT TO GET PICKS AND SHOVELS AND EXCAVATE, LIKE AN EGYPTIAN MUMMY!
I DON'T FEEL LIKE AN ARCHAEOLOGIST, MARGARET! NOW, SOME NICE COOL DAY IN OCTOBER, I'LL TAKE YOU UP ON THAT!
BUT WE CAN'T WAIT THAT LONG! DAD, YOU JUST GOTTA COME OUT AND HELP ME! DAD! DAD, I'LL GIVE YOU ALL THE MONEY IN MY PIGGY BANK! I'VE GOT FIVE WHOLE DOLLARS, IT TOOK ME A YEAR TO SAVE... AND IT'S ALL YOURS...
I'M TOUCHED! I'M REALLY TOUCHED! YOU WANT ME TO PLAY WITH YOU AND YOU'RE WILLING TO PAY FOR MY TIME! HONEST, MARGARET! YOU MAKE YOUR OLD DAD FEEL LIKE A PIKER! I DON'T GIVE YOU ENOUGH TIME! TELL YOU WHAT! I'LL COME OUT AND LISTEN TO YOUR SCREAMING WOMAN FREE OF CHARGE!
WILL YOU? OH, WILL YOU, REALLY?
...AFTER LUNCH! BUT, YOU MUST EAT ALL OF YOUR LUNCH FIRST!
MOTHER CAME IN AND SAT DOWN AND WE STARTED EATING...
NOT SO FAST!
YOU HEARD YOUR MOTHER!
BUT, THE SCREAMING WOMAN! WE'VE GOT TO HURRY!
2

I INTEND SITTING HERE QUIETLY GIVING MY ATTENTION FIRST TO MY STEAK, THEN TO MY POTATOES... AND MY SALAD, OF COURSE... THEN TO MY ICE CREAM, AND AFTER THAT TO A LONG DRINK OF ICED COFFEE, IF YOU DON'T MIND! I MAY BE A GOOD HOUR AT IT! AND ANOTHER THING, YOUNG LADY! IF YOU MENTION HER NAME... THIS SCREAMING WHATSIS... ONCE MORE DURING LUNCH, I WON'T GO OUT WITH YOU TO HEAR HER RECITAL! IS THAT UNDERSTOOD?
YES, SIR!

LUNCH WAS A MILLION YEARS LONG! EVERBODY MOVED IN SLOW MOTION! EVEN THE FLIES IN THE ROOM WERE SLOW! AND ALL THE WHILE WE SAT THERE SLOWLY, SLOWLY EATING OUR LUNCH, OUT THERE IN THE EMPTY LOT WAS THE SCREAMING WOMAN, ALL ALONE, WHILE THE WORLD ATE ITS LUNCH AND THE SUN WAS HOT AND THE LOT WAS EMPTY AS THE SKY. . .

SPEAKING OF SCREAMING WOMEN, CHARLIE NESBITT AND HIS WIFE, HELEN, HAD ANOTHER FIGHT LAST NIGHT! IF YOU ASK ME, HE'S NO GOOD... OR HER EITHER!
OH, I DON'T KNOW! I THINK HELEN'S PRETTY NICE!

YOU'RE PREJUDICED! AFTER ALL, YOU ALMOST MARRIED HER! YOU SHOWED SOME SENSE WHEN YOU BROKE OFF THAT ENGAGEMENT!
OH, YOU KNOW HELEN! BESIDES... SHE WAS STAGE-STRUCK! I REMEMBER SHE WROTE A SONG FOR ME ONCE! HOW DID IT GO...
HMMPH! YOU NEVER TOLD ME THAT! A SONG...
IT WAS BETWEEN HELEN AND ME! PRIVATE, LIKE! LET'S SEE... DUM-DE-DUM... HOW DID IT GO?
DAD? PLEASE...?
YOU'D BETTER TAKE YOUR DAUGHTER OUT IN THE BACK LOT BEFORE SHE COLLAPSES! YOU'LL SING ME THAT WONDERFUL SONG LATER!
OKAY! C'MON YOU...
HURRY! HURRY!

THE EMPTY LOT WAS STILL EMPTY AND HOT AND THE GLASS SPARKLED GREEN AND WHITE AND BROWN ALL AROUND WHERE THE BOTTLES LAY...
WE FORGOT THE SHOVELS!
WE'LL GET THEM LATER, AFTER WE HEAR THE SOLOIST!

I TOOK HIM TO THE SPOT...
I DON'T HEAR ANYTHING!
SHH! WAIT! LISTEN!
WE HEARD THE SUN IN THE SKY! WE HEARD THE WIND IN THE TREES, REAL QUIET! WE HEARD A STREET-CAR, FAR AWAY, RUNNING ALONG! WE HEARD A CAR PASS! THAT WAS ALL!
3

MARGARET! I SUGGEST YOU GO LIE DOWN AND PUT A DAMP CLOTH ON YOUR HEAD! I'M GOING BACK IN AND TAKE A SHOWER!
OH, DADDY! WE CAN'T LET HER DIE! SHE'S ALL BURIED, LIKE THAT PERSON IN THE STORY!
I RAN TO THE GARAGE AND GOT A COUPLE OF SHOVELS AND RAN TO THE EMPTY LOT! I STARTED TO DIG, AND THE WOMAN SCREAMED AGAIN! IT WAS HARD WORK, BUT WHAT COULD I DO! RUN TELL OTHER PEOPLE? THEY'D BE LIKE MOM AND DAD... PAY NO ATTENTION...
HI, MARGARET! WHAT ARE YOU DOIN'?
I GOT A SCREAMING WOMAN IN THE GROUND, DIPPY, AND I'M DIGGING FOR HER!
I DON'T HEAR NO SCREAMING!
YOU SIT DOWN AND WAIT AWHILE, AND YOU'LL HEAR HER SCREAM!
DIPPY WAITED! AND FINALLY, THE SCREAMING WOMAN SCREAMED...
HEY! THAT'S OKAY! DO IT AGAIN! GO ON! I'LL GIVE YOU A MARBLE IF YOU DO IT AGAIN!
I DON'T...
ANOTHER SCREAM CAME OUT OF THE GROUND...
DID YOU GET THE THROW-YOUR-VOICE BOOK FOR A DIME FROM THAT MAGIC COMPANY? YOU GOT ONE OF THOSE VENTRILOQUIST CONTRAPTIONS IN YOUR MOUTH?
Y-YES! IF YOU HELP DIG, I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT IT!
JUST THEN, A SHADOW FELL ACROSS US! IT WAS MR. KELLY, THE MAN WHO OWNED THE EMPTY LOT...
HEY, YOU KIDS! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?
OH! 'LO, MR. KELLY!
NOW YOU TAKE THOSE SHOVELS AND TAKE THAT SOIL AND SHOVEL IT RIGHT BACK IN THAT HOLE YOU HAVE BEEN DIGGING!
BUT MR. KELLY! THERE'S A SCREAMING WOMAN...
I'M NOT INTERESTED!
LISTEN!
THE SCREAM...
DON'T HEAR NOTHING! GO ON, NOW! FILL IT UP AND GET HOME WITH YOU BEFORE I GIVE YOU MY FOOT!
E-E-E-E-E-E
4

WE FILLED THE HOLE ALL BACK IN AGAIN! AND ALL THE WHILE WE FILLED IT IN, MR. KELLY STOOD THERE, AND THE WOMAN SCREAMED, BUT MR. KELLY PRETENDED NOT TO HEAR IT...

AND AFTER WE WERE THROUGH, WE RAN AWAY... CARRYING THE SHOVELS...

HE MURDERED MRS. KELLY! HE BURIED HER THERE... IN A BOX... BUT SHE CAME TO! WHY HE STOOD RIGHT THERE AND SHE SCREAMED AND HE WOULDN'T PAY ANY ATTENTION!
YOU SURE GOT ME INTO TROUBLE WITH YOUR DARN OLD VENTRILOQUIST VOICE! AND I JUST HAPPENED TO REMEMBER..

AIN'T OLD MAN KELLY SORT OF DEAF... HARD-OF-HEARING?
OH, MY GOSH! NO WONDER HE DIDN'T HEAR THE SCREAMS! DIPPY! COME BACK! WHAT ABOUT THE SCREAMING WOMAN?

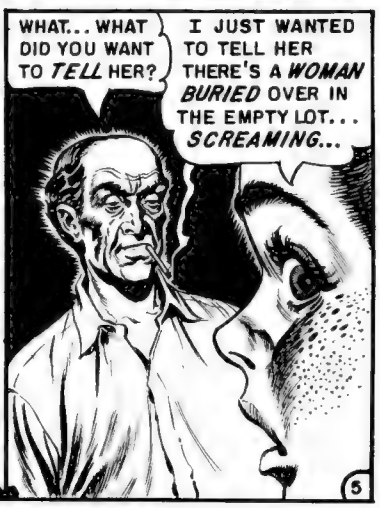
I WAS LEFT ALL ALONE IN THE WORLD... NO ONE TO HELP ME... NO ONE TO BELIEVE ME AT ALL! THERE WAS ONLY ONE LAST THING TO DO...

I WENT FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE ALL DOWN THE STREET! I RANG EVERY BELL...

...AND ONCE I SAW THAT THE LADY OF THE HOUSE WAS HOME, I WENT ON DOWN THE STREET! FINALLY I CAME TO THE LAST DOOR... OUR NEIGHBORS... THE NESBITTS...

I SLIPPED IN PAST HIM...

WELL... MY WIFE WON'T BE BACK TODAY, KID! SHE'S GONE TO THE STORE, LIKE I SAID... BUT... BUT SHE'S GOING ON FROM THERE... TO VISIT HER MOTHER... IN SCHENECTADY!
OH! THAT'S A SHAME! I WANTED TO TELL HER SOMETHING!



YOU DROPPED YOUR CIGARETTE, MR. NESBITT!
OH, DID I? SURE! SO I DID! YOU... YOU...EH...YOU SAY ANYTHING ABOUT THIS TO ANYONE, KID?
SURE! I TOLD LOTS OF PEOPLE!
ANYBODY DOIN' ANYTHING ABOUT IT?
NO! THEY WON'T BELIEVE ME!
OF COURSE! HEH, HEH! NATURALLY! YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A KID! WHY SHOULD THEY LISTEN TO YOU?
I'M GOING BACK NOW AND DIG HER OUT WITH A SPADE!
STICK AROUND!
I KNEW WHAT HE WAS TRYING TO DO! HE WAS TRYING TO KEEP ME IN HIS HOUSE UNTIL THE SCREAMING DIED DOWN! HE WAS TRYING TO KEEP ME FROM HELPING HER...
I GOT TO GO!
LET'S PLAY CARDS! MY WIFE'LL BE HOME SOON! SURE! TEN MINUTES! SIT DOWN!
WE PLAYED CARDS! THE CLOCK TICKED! THE SUN WENT DOWN! IT WAS GETTING LATE! THE SCREAMING GOT FAINTER IN MY MIND! I JUMPED UP AND RAN OUT THE DOOR...
HEY, YOU...
I GOT TO GO, MR. NESBITT!
I WENT BACK TO THE EMPTY LOT AND I HID IN SOME BUSHES! WHAT COULD I DO? NOBODY WOULD BELIEVE ME ...
THE SCREAMING! THE SCREAMING'S STOPPED!
IT WAS SO QUIET I THOUGHT I'D NEVER HEAR A SCREAM AGAIN! IT WAS ALL OVER! IT WAS TOO LATE! I BENT DOWN AND PUT MY EAR TO THE GROUND...
P...PLEASE... PLEASE...DON'T DIE...
AND THEN I HEARD IT...WAY DOWN, WAY DEEP, AND SO FAINT I COULD HARDLY HEAR IT! THE WOMAN WASN'T SCREAMING ANYMORE! SHE WAS SINGING...
I LOVED YOU FAIR...
I LOVED YOU WELL...
6

IT WAS SORT OF A SAD SONG...VERY FAINT! AND SORT OF BROKEN! ALL OF THE HOURS DOWN UNDER THE GROUND IN THE BOX MUST HAVE SORT OF MADE HER CRAZY! I LISTENED TO THE SONG...AND THEN I WALKED HOME...
SO THERE YOU ARE! WELL, YOU'RE GOING TO GET THE LICKING OF YOUR LIFE! DO YOU KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS?
WHY...
SHE'S NOT SCREAMING ANY MORE, DADDY! SHE'S SINGING NOW!
YOU'RE NOT TELLING THE TRUTH!
DADDY! SHE'S OUT THERE AND SHE'LL BE DEAD SOON IF YOU DON'T LISTEN TO ME! SHE'S OUT THERE, SINGING, AND THIS IS WHAT SHE'S SINGING...
I LOVED YOU FAIR... I LOVED YOU WELL...
WHERE...WHERE DID YOU HEAR THAT SONG?
OUT IN THE EMPTY LOT... JUST NOW!
BUT THAT'S HELEN'S SONG... THE ONE SHE WROTE...YEARS AGO...FOR ME! YOU CAN'T KNOW IT! NOBODY KNOWS IT, EXCEPT HELEN AND ME! I NEVER SANG IT TO ANYONE!
SURE, DADDY!
OH, MY GOD!
DADDY RAN OUT THE DOOR TO GET A SHOVEL...
HELEN... HELEN...
THE LAST I SAW OF HIM, HE WAS IN THE EMPTY LOT... DIGGING! AND LOTS OF OTHER PEOPLE WERE WITH HIM... DIGGING...
AND I FELT SO HAPPY, I WANTED TO CRY!
THE END 7

OTHER "INSPIRED BY" STORIES

THE CRYPT OF TERROR

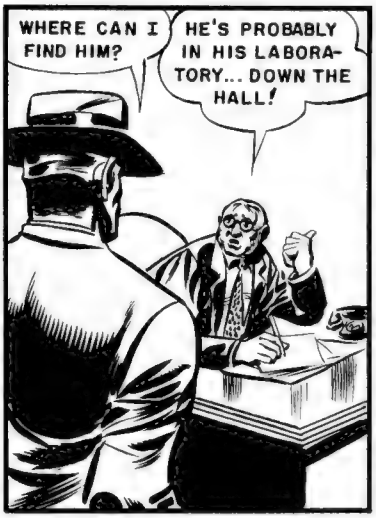
HERE'S A DELIGHTFUL TALE THAT I'M SURE WILL MAKE THE HAIRS ON THE BACK OF YOUR NECK CRAWL! IT'S A CHILLER-DILLER SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED TO FREEZE THE BLOOD IN YOUR VEINS! FROM MY VAST COLLECTION OF TERROR TALES THAT I KEEP HERE IN THE *CRYPT*, I... THE *CRYPT-KEEPER*... CHOOSE THE SPINE-TINGLING YARN I CALL...

THE JELLYFISH!

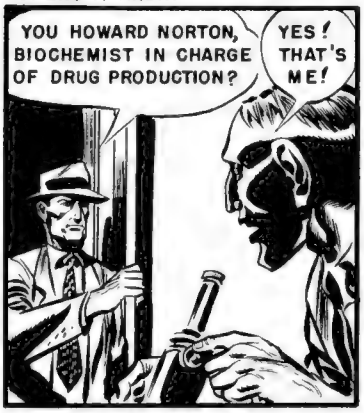
NIGHT COVERS THE SLEEPING CITY! IT SHROUDS THE DARK STREETS AND DESERTED ALLEYS LIKE A VELVET BLANKET! HERE AND THERE A MOTH HOLE OF TWINKLING LIGHT MARS THE BLACKNESS! ONE OF THESE LIGHTS SHINES FROM A WINDOW OF THE BUILDING MARKED 'NORTON PHARMACEUTICAL SUPPLY CO.' INSIDE, TWO MEN FACE EACH OTHER...
NO, CHARLES! I WON'T DO IT! IT'S *CRIMINAL!*
YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A *SPINELESS COWARD*, HOWARD! YOU'VE GOT NO *BACKBONE!*
1

CALL ME ANYTHING YOU LIKE, CHARLES! I WILL NOT PERMIT SUCH AN OUTRAGE!
BUT WE CAN MAKE THOUSANDS, HOWARD! WE'LL BE RICH!
I DON'T CARE, CHARLES! YOU'RE PLAYING WITH HUMAN LIFE! I WILL NOT AGREE TO SUCH A FIENDISH PLOT!
LISTEN, YOU JELLY-FISH! I'M THE BUSINESS MANAGER OF THIS COMPANY! WHAT I SAY GOES!
ONLY SO FAR AS BUSINESS MATTERS ARE CONCERNED! WHEN IT COMES TO DRUG PRODUCTION, I HAVE THE FINAL WORD! AND I SAY... NO!
LOOK, HOWARD! THIS IS AN ORDER FOR ONE MILLION HYPODERMIC INSERTS OF INSULIN! WE CAN ONLY MANUFACTURE FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND OF SUCH UNITS IN THE TIME ALLOWED! NOW, IF WE JUST DILUTE EACH CAPSULE ONE HALF... WE CAN MEET THIS ORDER!
CHARLES! YOU CAN CALL ME A SPINELESS JELLYFISH... YOU CAN CALL ME A COWARD WITH NO BACKBONE... YOU CAN CALL ME ANYTHING YOU LIKE! I WILL NOT LET YOU DILUTE OUR INSULIN OUTPUT TO MEET THIS ORDER AND THAT'S FINAL! NOW, I'M LATE FOR MY TRAIN! I'LL BE OUT OF TOWN FOR THE NEXT FEW DAYS!
HOWARD NORTON, BIOCHEMIST IN CHARGE OF DRUG PRODUCTION FOR THE NORTON PHARMACEUTICAL SUPPLY COMPANY, TURNS FROM HIS BROTHER, CHARLES, AND STORMS OUT OF THE OFFICE! CHARLES, THE BUSINESS MANAGER OF THE CONCERN, SINKS WEARILY INTO A CHAIR...
A TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND DOLLAR ORDER... THROWN OUT THE WINDOW BECAUSE MY BROTHER IS A WEAKLING...
WELL I DON'T LET THAT KIND OF MONEY GO SO EASILY! NOT ME! I'M NO JELLYFISH! HOWARD NEEDN'T FIND OUT! I'LL DO IT WITHOUT HIS CONSENT! I'LL JUST FORGE HIS NAME TO THIS PRODUCTION ORDER AND START SHIPPING IMMEDIATELY! WHEN HOWARD RETURNS, THE ORDER WILL HAVE BEEN FILLED...
2

AND SO, WITHOUT HOWARD KNOWING IT, CHARLES NORTON BEGINS THE SHIPMENTS OF DILUTED INSULIN! Y'KNOW WHAT *INSULIN* IS, KIDDIES? PEOPLE SUFFERING FROM *DIABETES* HAVE TO TAKE IT OR ELSE THEY PASS OUT... MAYBE EVEN DIE!
WHAT IS IT, DOCTOR?
HE'S IN A COMA! ARE YOU SURE HE TOOK HIS *INSULIN* TODAY, MRS. GREENE?
POSITIVE, DOCTOR! I GAVE IT TO HIM MYSELF!
STRANGE! LET ME SEE HIS INSULIN SUPPLY!
ALL OVER THE COUNTRY, THINGS BEGIN TO HAPPEN...
H...HE JUST *COLLAPSED*... RIGHT THERE ON THE SIDEWALK!
SOMEBODY GET A *DOCTOR!*
DON'T *BOTHER!* *THIS GUY'S DEAD!*
PEOPLE TAKING NORTON INSULIN FOR DIABETES BEGIN TO DROP LIKE FLIES...
I... I'M SORRY, MR. THORMTON! YOUR WIFE IS *DEAD!* SHE MUST HAVE FORGOTTEN TO TAKE HER INSULIN LATELY!
BUT... SHE *DID!* SHE TOOK IT EVERY DAY... JUST AS YOU PRESCRIBED!
AND THEN IT IS DISCOVERED...
NO! IT CAN'T BE! THIS INSULIN HAS BEEN *DILUTED!* IT'S... IT'S PRACTICALLY WORTHLESS IN THIS CONCENTRATION!
IN A FEW DAYS...
I'M FROM THE GOVERNMENT... PURE FOODS AND DRUGS ADMINISTRATION! WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DRUG PRODUCTION OF THIS COMPANY?
WHY, MY BROTHER HOWARD IS BIOCHEMIST IN CHARGE! I'M JUST THE BUSINESS MANAGER!
3



THE GOVERNMENT MAN MOVES DOWN THE HALL TO THE DOOR MARKED 'LABORATORY'! HE OPENS IT AND...



CHARLES WATCHES, A FAINT SMILE ON HIS FACE, AS THE STUTTERING, STAMMERING HOWARD IS HANDCUFFED...

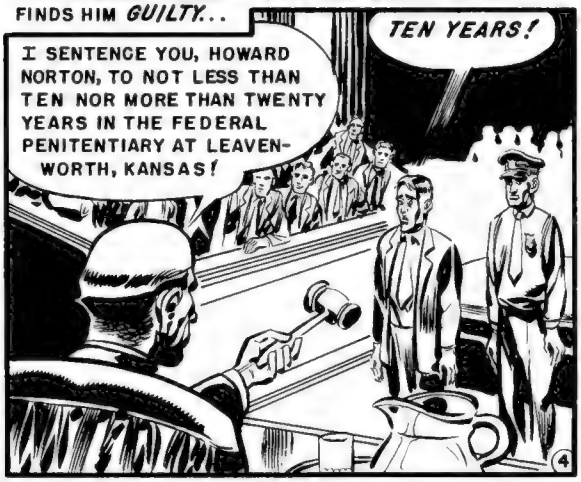
HOWARD! YOU'RE ACTING LIKE A BABY! HAVEN'T YOU GOT A BACKBONE? DON'T BE A SPINELESS COWARD! FACE IT...LIKE A MAN!
WHAT... WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? WHAT DID I DO?
C'MON, MR. NORTON!

IN HIS CELL, AWAITING TRIAL...

THE TRIAL IS SWIFT! THE EVIDENCE AGAINST HOWARD IS UNDENIABLE! HE HAD BEEN IN CHARGE! 'HE' HAD 'SIGNED' THE PRODUCTION ORDER! HE MUST BE GUILTY! HOWARD REMAINS SILENT THROUGHOUT THE PROCEEDINGS... RESIGNED...

...AND SO I SAY TO YOU, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF THE JURY...
CHARLES WAS RIGHT! HE CALLED ME SPINELESS... A JELLYFISH! WELL, MAYBE I AM! I MUST BE! IF I WEREN'T... I'D FIGHT THIS... THIS FRAME-UP!

BUT HOWARD DOESN'T FIGHT! AND WHEN THE JURY FINDS HIM GUILTY...

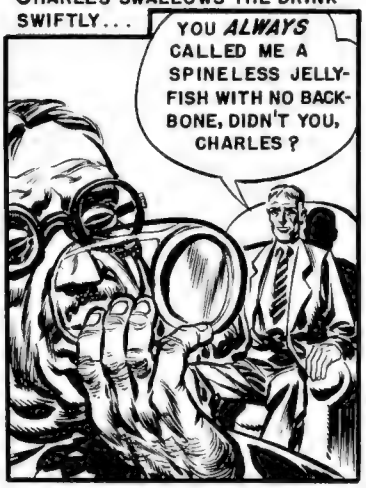

I SENTENCE YOU, HOWARD NORTON, TO NOT LESS THAN TEN NOR MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS IN THE FEDERAL PENITENTIARY AT LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS!
TEN YEARS!
4

YES, THE JUDGE SENTENCES HOWARD NORTON TO FROM TEN TO TWENTY YEARS! THAT'S A LONG TIME! TIME FOR A MAN TO THINK... TO PLAN... TO GROW BITTER...
SO HE SAID I HAD NO BACKBONE, EH? WELL...WE'LL SEE! WE'LL SEE!
HEY, NORTON! THE WARDEN WANTS TO SEE YOU!
YOU WANTED TO SEE ME, WARDEN?
YES, NORTON! SIT DOWN!
I'VE BEEN LOOKING OVER YOUR RECORD! YOU'RE A BIO-CHEMIST... AND A GOOD ONE AT THAT! WE COULD USE A MAN LIKE YOU IN THE PRISON HOSPITAL LAB! WANT THE JOB?
W...WHY... YES, SIR!
THEN THE JOB IS YOURS! NOW REMEMBER, NORTON! YOU'RE ON YOUR HONOR! NO DILUTING OF DRUGS, EH?
NO, SIR! YOU CAN DEPEND ON ME, SIR!
AND SO, HOWARD NORTON GOES TO WORK IN THE PRISON HOSPITAL LABORATORY! IN SPARE MOMENTS HE BEGINS TO EXPERIMENT...
HEY, NORTON! WHY AREN'T YOU DOWN IN THE RECREATION HALL? THEY'VE GOT A GOOD MOVIE TONIGHT!
I'D RATHER STAY HERE, GUARD! I'M... I'M WORKING ON SOMETHING!
YES! TEN YEARS IS A LONG TIME! PLENTY OF TIME FOR A MAN TO FIND WHAT HE'S LOOKING FOR...
UGH! THIS CHOW IS AWFUL! SAY, NORTON! ARE YOU NUTS? WHAT ARE YOU PUTTING THOSE BONES IN YOUR POCKET FOR?
I...I NEED THEM FOR AN EXPERIMENT I'M WORKING ON!
ONE DAY, AFTER EIGHT LONG YEARS...
AT LAST! I'VE SUCCEEDED! SO I'VE GOT NO BACKBONE, EH, CHARLES? SO I'M JUST A JELLYFISH, EH? WE'LL SEE! WE'LL SEE!
5

AND SO, AFTER TEN YEARS OF GOOD BEHAVIOR, HOWARD NORTON IS PAROLED...
FREE... AT LAST!
A FEW NIGHTS LATER, AS CHARLES NORTON IS SITTING IN HIS LUXURIOUS HOME...
YES, GOLLINS?
IT'S YOUR BROTHER, SIR! HE'S OUTSIDE! HE WANTS TO SEE YOU!
HOWARD... OUT OF PRISON? SEND HIM AWAY! I DON'T WANT TO SEE HIM! I...
CHARLES! IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME!
H-HOW ARE YOU, HOWARD?
AS WELL AS CAN BE EXPECTED, CHARLES! HOW'S BUSINESS? YOU LOOK QUITE PROSPEROUS!
Y-YES! THAT INSULIN ORDER WAS JUST WHAT WE NEEDED! AFTER THE SCANDAL, I SWITCHED TO PLASTICS! MADE QUITE A LOT OF MONEY!
I WONDER IF YOU COULD FIND A PLACE FOR ME, CHARLES? I'M ASKING YOU TO FORGIVE ME FOR THE TROUBLE I CAUSED YOU!
STILL THE SPINELESS JELLYFISH, EH, HOWARD? APOLOGIZING WHEN YOU KNOW I FRAMED YOU! ALL RIGHT! I FORGIVE YOU! YOU CAN START IN THE MORNING!
THANK YOU, CHARLES! THANK YOU!
COME! WE'LL DRINK TO OUR REUNION! NO HARD FEELINGS?
NO HARD FEELINGS, CHARLES!
6

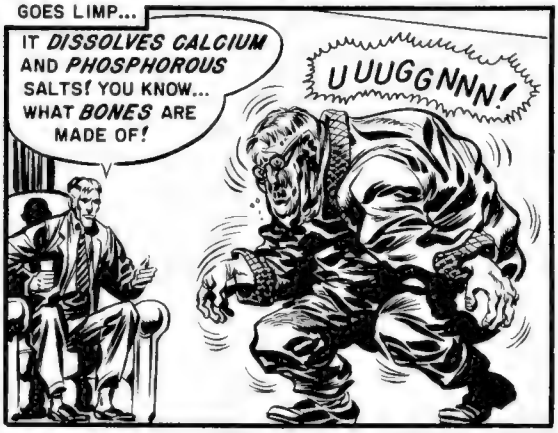
AS CHARLES POURS THE DRINKS, HOWARD TAKES A SMALL WHITE PILL FROM HIS POCKET AND DROPS IT INTO CHARLES' GLASS WHILE HIS HEAD IS TURNED...

CHARLES SWALLOWS THE DRINK SWIFTLY...



CHARLES SHUDDERS AND STARES AT THE GLASS...

THE GLASS FALLS TO THE FLOOR AND SHATTERS! CHARLES GRASPS THE TABLE FOR SUPPORT! HIS BODY GOES LIMP...



SUDDENLY, THE RIGIDITY LEAVES CHARLES' BODY AND HE COLLAPSES TO THE FLOOR... A MASS OF FLESH...

HOWARD GAZES AT THE MOUND OF QUIVERING FLESH BEFORE HIM! HIS THOUGHTS GO BACK TO THE DAYS WHEN HE WAS A CHILD, AT THE BEACH... WHEN HE WOULD ACCIDENTALLY CRUSH A SLIMY JELLYFISH UNDER HIS BARE FOOT! HE SHUDDERS... CLENCHES HIS FISTS AND...

HEH, HEH! WELL, THAT'S MY LITTLE OFFERING FOR YOUR CONTEMPLATION, DEAR READER! YES, THERE WERE *NO HARD FEELINGS ANYMORE!* IN FACT, AFTER *HOWARD* HAD REMOVED HIS *SHOES AND SOCKS, CHARLES* FELT *QUITE SOFT* TO HIM! HOWARD WASTED NO TIME! BESIDES, IT WAS GETTING *LATE!* HE *HAD* TO *STEP ON IT!* 'BYE NOW! SEE YOU IN MY OWN BOOK, *TALES FROM THE CRYPT.* I'LL RETURN YOU NOW TO MY FELLOW *GHOULUNATIC, THE VAULT-KEEPER!*
7

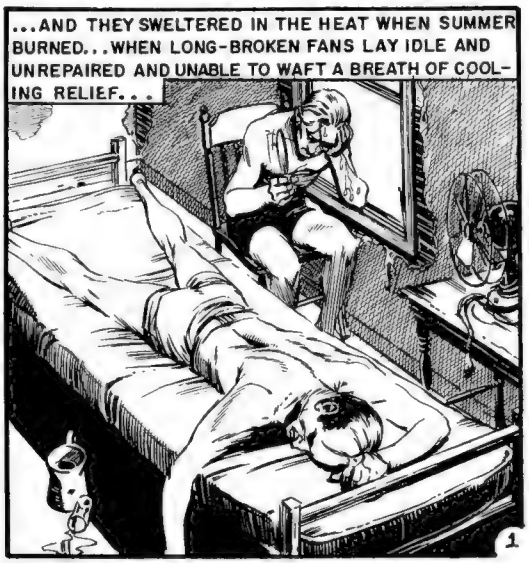
THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH! AND NOW THAT *V. K.* HAS *CURDLED* YOUR *ANEMIC BLOOD*, IT'S TIME FOR YOUR *HOST* IN *THE CRYPT OF TERROR, THE CRYPT-KEEPER*... NAMELY, *ME*... TO *ENTERTAIN* YOU WITH A *SPINE-TINGLING, NAUSEATING NOVELETTE* FROM *MY CREEP COLLECTION*. LET'S SEE! OH... LET'S *NOT* SEE! *YES! THIS* IS A *GOOD GORY ONE!* IT'S CALLED...

BLIND ALLEYS

THE "HOME" WAS OLD AND PAINT-STARVED AND DRAFTY AND BADLY IN NEED OF REPAIR. THE ROOF LEAKED AND THE WINDOWS RATTLED AND WERE COVERED WITH YEARS OF DUST AND GRIME. THE INMATES OF THE HOME WALKED GRIM-FACED AND SILENT THROUGH CRACKED PLASTER HALLS, OR SAT IN DINGY ROOMS ON CRAWLING BEDS. THEY SHIVERED IN THE COLD WHEN WINTER CAME... WHEN THERE WAS NO STEAM TO WARM THE RUSTED RADIATORS...

...AND THEY SWELTERED IN THE HEAT WHEN SUMMER BURNED... WHEN LONG-BROKEN FANS LAY IDLE AND UNREPAIRED AND UNABLE TO WAFT A BREATH OF COOLING RELIEF...



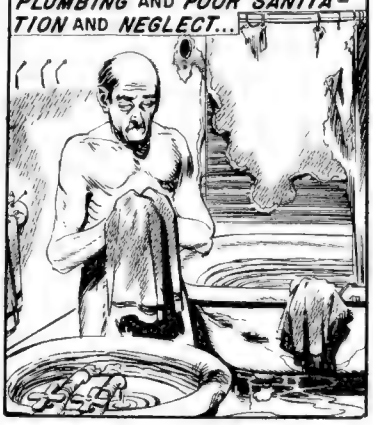
BUT THEY COULD NOT *SEE* THE PAINT-PEELED WALLS...THE DIRT-CLOUDED WINDOWS... THE DUSTY AND COBWEBBED HALLS OF THIS, THEIR HOME...THESE INMATES. THEY COULD NOT *SEE* THE ROACHES AND THE RATS SCAMPERING ACROSS THE UNWASHED FLOORS. . .

... AS *THIS* WAS A "HOME" FOR THE *BLIND*...FOR *WRETCHED SOULS* WHO *LIVED* IN WORLDS OF *DARKNESS*...WHO STARED WITH *UNSEEING* EYES AT THE MISERY AROUND THEM... AND YET *KNEW* AND *HATED* ALL OF IT...

FOR THE LOSS OF *ONE* SENSE ONLY TENDS TO *SHARPEN* THE *OTHERS*.. TO *TUNE* THEM MORE *FINELY*...TO MAKE THEM MORE *ACUTE*. THE INMATES *KNEW* BECAUSE THEY COULD *TASTE*...AND *TOUCH*...AND *SMELL* AND *HEAR*. THEY COULD *TASTE* THE *SPOILED* AND *ROTTED FOOD* PLACED BEFORE THEM AT MEALTIMES...

THEY COULD *TOUCH* THE *STICKY, FILMY COBWEBS*...THE *DUST LAYERS* COVERING EVERYTHING...

THEY COULD *SMELL* THE FOUL ODORS OF *MILDEW* AND *FAULTY PLUMBING* AND *POOR SANITATION* AND *NEGLECT*...



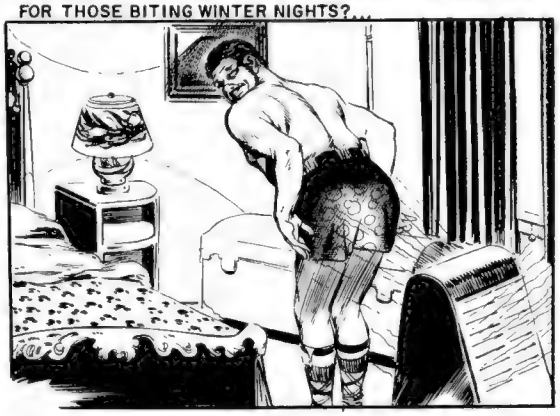
THEY COULD *HEAR* THE *RATS* SCAMPERING AND THE *ROACHES* CRAWLING AND THE *TERMITES* BURROWING AND THE *LICE* AND *BEDBUGS* AND *FLIES* AND A THOUSAND *OTHER* CREATURES OF FILTH THAT MOVED...

AND THEY COULD HEAR *OTHER* CREATURES *TOO*... *OTHER* CREATURES OF FILTH THAT MOVED. THEY COULD HEAR *MR. GRUNWALD*, THE HOME'S DIRECTOR, IN HIS OFFICE-APARTMENT DOWNSTAIRS, ENTERTAINING HIS LATEST LADY FRIEND WITH THE MONEY HE'D SAVED ON THEM...THE INMATES...

THEY COULD HEAR HIS ALMOST MANIACAL LAUGHTER AND THE CLINKING OF CHAMPAGNE GLASSES. THEY COULD SMELL THE MOUTHWATERING ODORS OF THE LAVISH SUPPER HE WAS ENJOYING, AND THEY COULD SEE, IN THEIR MINDS' EYES, THE LUXURIES WITH WHICH HE'D SELFISHLY SURROUNDED HIMSELF AT THEIR EXPENSE...

YES, GUNNER GRUNWALD HAD *INDEED* SURROUNDED HIMSELF WITH LUXURIES...PAID FOR WITH THE *ALLOTMENTS* GIVEN HIM FOR EACH BLIND INMATE. WHY *PAINT* AND *PLASTER DREARY HALLS* THAT *THEY'D* NEVER *SEE*, WHEN *HE* COULD HAVE AN *AIR-CONDITIONER* FOR THOSE BLISTERING SUMMER DAYS?...

WHY *LAUNDER SHEETS* AND *BLANKETS* AND *CLOTHES* OF DIRT SMEARS AND SWEAT STAINS THAT *THEY'D* NEVER SEE WHEN HE COULD HAVE A *HEATER* FOR THOSE BITING WINTER NIGHTS?...



WHY GIVE THOSE POOR MISERABLE BLIND FOOLS *BEAUTY* IF THEY COULD NOT *APPRECIATE* BEAUTY? GUNNER GRUNWALD'D *FELT* THAT WAY! SO HE'D *SKIMPED* ON THE INMATES...*CUT CORNERS HERE*... *DENIED THERE*... AND WITH THE *SURPLUS*, HE'D SUPPLIED *HIMSELF* WITH BEAUTY...

FINE *FURNITURE*...GOOD *BOOKS*... PLUSH *RUGS*... EXPENSIVE *DRAPES*... AN OCCASIONAL EVENING OF *FEMALE COMPANIONSHIP*... THEY WERE *ALL* GUNNER'S TO ENJOY. HE'D EVEN BOUGHT A *DOG*...A *VICIOUS* DOG. HE'D HAD A *GOOD REASON*...

FOR GUNNER'D KNOWN THAT *ANOTHER* SENSE HAD REPLACED THE INMATES' SENSE OF SIGHT... A *DEEP-SEEDED* SENSE...*GROWING* EACH DAY. HE'D SEEN IT IN THEIR WEBBED-BLIND *EYES*, IN THEIR SILENT GRIM *FACES*. HE'D SEEN THEIR GROWING *HATE*. SO HE'D BOUGHT THE DOG FOR *PROTECTION*...

AND WITH THE DOG AT HIS SIDE, GUNNER'D WALKED *SELF-CONFIDENTLY* BEFORE THEM, KNOWING THAT HIS SIGHT AND THE DOG'S STRENGTH WOULD KEEP HIM FROM *HARM*...

AND SO, HE'D BEEN ABLE TO *CONTINUE* TO ENJOY HIS FIENDISH LITTLE AMUSEMENTS...LIKE *TRIPPING* HELPLESS UNSUSPECTING INMATES AS THEY'D TOTTER BLINDLY BY HIM...

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...OR *REMOVING* SOMETHING THAT THEY'D COME TO *KNOW* WAS THERE AND *COUNTED ON*...

...OR *ADDING* SOMETHING NEW...

...OR BEING JUST *MEAN*...

YES, GUNNER'D *AMUSED* HIMSELF WITH HIS CHARGES' INABILITY TO SEE. HE'D BEEN *SADISTIC* WITH HIS TORTURES. AND HE'D GROWN *FAT* ON HIS DENIALS. AND HIS CHARGES HAD SAT IN THEIR WORLD OF DARKNESS AND *WAITED..LISTENING*...

...LISTENING FOR THEIR *OPPORTUNITY*...

...AND *TONIGHT*...THEIR *OPPORTUNITY* CAME...

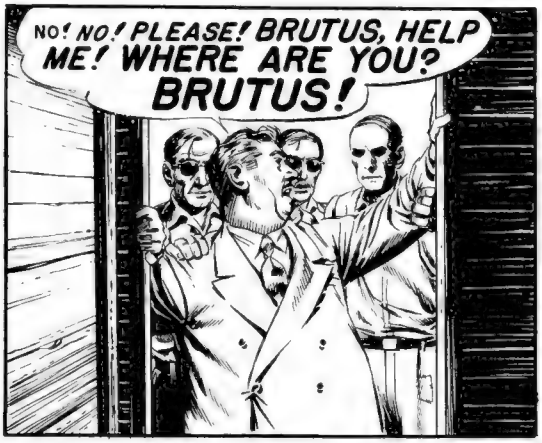
...SO THEY LURED THE DOG DOWN INTO THE OLD MUSTY CELLAR OF THE HOME WITH SOME MEAT SCRAPS THEY'D SAVED FROM THEIR SCANT MEALS...

AND THEN THEY WAITED. THEY WAITED FOR GUNNER'S FRIEND OF THE EVENING TO LEAVE...

THEY WAITED FOR GUNNER TO MISS HIS DOG...

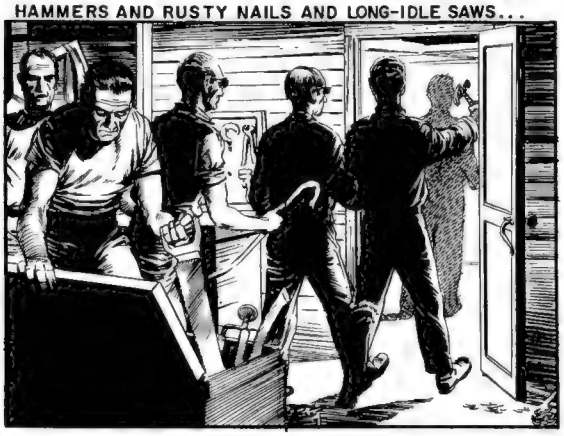
...AND THEN THEY STRUCK! BLINDLY... UNSEEING... THEY SURROUNDED THEIR HATED ENEMY...

...AND DRAGGED HIM TO THE CELLAR TOO...TO ANOTHER WAITING CUBICLE...

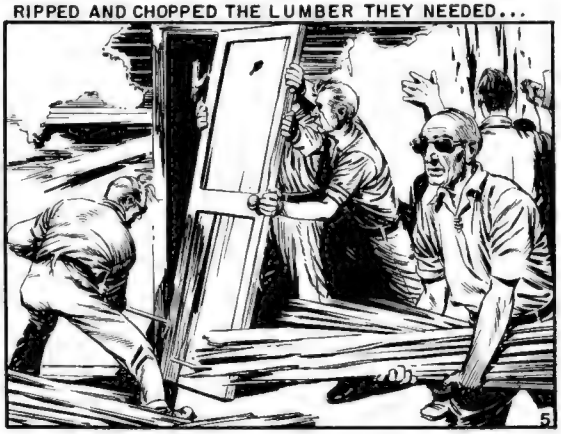


BUT GUNNER'S ONLY ANSWER WAS THE SOFT WHINE OF THE DOG IN THE ADJOINING CUBICLE...

THEN THEY BEGAN TO WORK. THEY DRAGGED OUT OLD HAMMERS AND RUSTY NAILS AND LONG-IDLE SAWS...



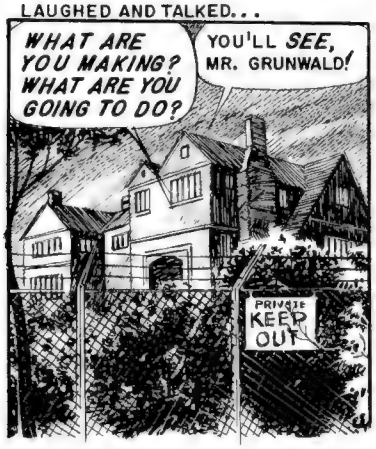
AND THEY WENT THROUGH THE HOME AND CUT AND RIPPED AND CHOPPED THE LUMBER THEY NEEDED...



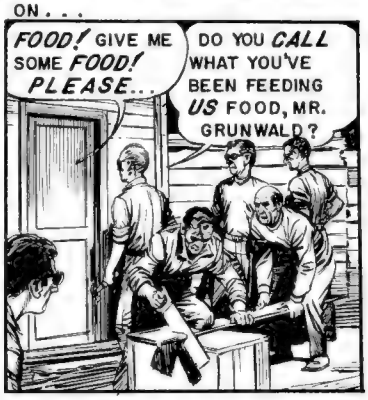
GUNNER LISTENED TO THE HAMMERING ECHOING THROUGH THE CELLAR. HE LISTENED TO THEIR GIGGLES AND CHATTER, AND HE WONDERED...

AND HE LISTENED AS THE NIGHT PASSED AND DAWN CAME AND THE DOG IN THE CUBICLE NEXT DOOR GREW HUNGRY AND PACED AND GROWLED AND SCRATCHED AS ITS STOMACH GNAWED...

THE DAY PASSED AND NIGHT CAME AGAIN. GUNNER'S OWN STOMACH ACHED WITH HUNGER. AND STILL THEY HAMMERED AND SAWED AND LAUGHED AND TALKED...



THE DOG IN THE NEXT CUBICLE HOWLED ALL THAT NIGHT, SLOBBERING AND SNARLING AND SCRATCHING. GUNNER SHUDDERED. THE DOG WAS A BEAST, NOW... A HUNGER-CRAZED BEAST. AND THE HAMMERING WENT ON...



DAWN CAME AGAIN AND THE SECOND DAY PASSED. NEXT DOOR, THE DOG WAS FIGHTING WITH ITSELF, THROWING ITSELF AGAINST THE CUBICLE SIDES AND HOWLING MADLY...

GUNNER HIMSELF WAS HALF-CRAZED WITH HUNGER AS THE THIRD NIGHT CAME. AND THEN, TOWARDS MIDNIGHT, THE HAMMERING STOPPED. THE CELLAR WAS SUDDENLY FLOODED WITH LIGHT. EVEN BRUTUS STOPPED SNARLING IN ANTICIPATION...

THEY STOOD BEFORE HIM... DIRTY, SWEATY, TIRED FROM LONG HOURS OF LABOR... THE INMATES... THE BLIND UNSEEING CARPENTERS. GUNNER BLINKED OUT AT THEM...

COME, MR. GRUNWALD! YOU ARE *FREE TO GO!*
FOLLOW US, MR. GRUNWALD! WE BUILT THIS *JUST FOR YOU!* IT LEADS TO THE *CELLAR STEPS*...AND *FREEDOM!*
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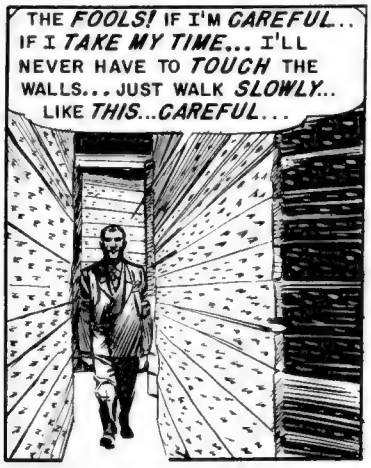
GUNNER STOOD UP AS THEY DARTED OFF. HE COULD HEAR THEIR FOOTSTEPS FADE AS THEY ROUNDED CORNERS AND RAN DOWN LONG CORRIDORS THAT TURNED AND TWISTED AND DOUBLED BACK. GUNNER STARED...

AND THEN GUNNER SAW THE GLEAMING GLITTERING SLIVERS OF STEEL EMBEDDED IN THE MAZE WALLS...

GUNNER LAUGHED TO HIMSELF AS HE STARTED OUT OF HIS CUBICLE...



A SOUND BEHIND GUNNER FROZE HIS BLOOD! A SNARL AND A SQUEAK OF A DOOR OPENING...

GUNNER BEGAN TO RUN. HE HAD TO REACH FREEDOM BEFORE THAT STARVED DOG CAUGHT HIM! HE RAN DOWN THE TWISTING MAZE CORRIDORS...THE SOUND OF THE LOPING SNARLING DOG BEHIND HIM...

HE BRUSHED AGAINST THE RAZOR BLADES, SLASHING HIS FLESH. HE STUMBLED AND GOT UP...RAN ON...FRIGHTENED...WILD...DOWN THROUGH THE TWISTING, DOUBLING-BACK MAZE CORRIDORS WITH THE RAZOR-LINED WALLS AND THE SLOBBERING HOUND CLOSE BEHIND...

AND THEN SOME IDIOT TURNED OUT THE LIGHTS!

OOPS! WRONG TURN, GUNNER! NOW, NOW! DON'T GO TO PIECES! AFTER ALL! IT'S ALMOST LIKE BEING BLIND! WELL, KIDDIES. THAT'S MY LAST SICKENING STORY FOR MY FIRST SICKENING BOOK! IT'S TIME TO CLOSE THE CRYPT OF TERROR AND TURN YOU BACK TO THE VAULT-KEEPER. AS THE DISMEMBERED PARTS OF A CORPSE SAID WHEN THEY WERE SHIPPED TO THE UNDERTAKER'S... "WE'LL GET TOGETHER AGAIN!" 'BYE!

RAY BRADBURY

Ray Bradbury was born in Waukegan, Ill., on Aug. 22, 1920. His mother was of Swedish descent, and his father's ancestors came to America in 1630. Ray spent much of his childhood in Arizona. At the age of 12, he received his first typewriter, a toy model, and started to write sequels to Edgar Rice Burroughs novels. As a boy, his greatest interests were magic, acting, and reading the Oz books, Tom Swift, Edgar Allen Poe, and Jules Verne. So it was quite natural, when he began writing, that his first stories were fantasies. He took a short-story course in Los Angeles High School in 1937, graduated in 1938, and had no further formal education. He started submitting stories to magazines at the age of 15, and sold his first story at the age of 21. His early acceptances appeared in the leading pulp magazines. Then in 1945, he sold his first "quality" story to the American Mercury, and followed this with sales to most of America's best-known slick magazines. His stories have been reprinted in some 60 anthologies, including the 1946, 1948, and 1952 volumes of The Best American Short Stories. In 1948, Ray won third prize in the O. Henry Memorial Prize Stories Awards. The only other job Bradbury has ever held outside of writing was during the three years from 1939 to 1942, when he sold newspapers on a street corner at night, while writing during the day. He has had three books of stories published: DARK CARNIVAL, from Arkham House in 1947; THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES, from Doubleday in 1950; and THE ILLUSTRATED MAN, Doubleday, 1951. His new book of stories, THE GOLDEN APPLES OF THE SUN, is due, again from Doubleday, about the time this biog hits the stands. Ray has just finished writing a science-fiction movie script for a big Hollywood film studio, and has started another. He now lives in Los Angeles with his wife Marguerite, whom he married in 1947, and his two daughters . . . Susan, age three, and Ramona, eighteen months. Having been a fervent collector of comic strips and panels since the age of eight (owning a complete file of Buck Rogers strips from 1928 through 1937, Flash Gordon from 1934 through 1938, Prince Valiant from 1937 through the present, and Tarzan (drawn by Hal Foster) from 1932 through 1936, plus hundreds of old Popeyes, Out Our Ways, Alley Oops, etc.), Ray was most enthusiastic when we suggested adapting some of best stories into the comic format. His reaction to the job E.C. is doing can best be summed up in his own words: "*. . . My thanks and gratitude for the really fine adaptations and beautiful art work you are doing on my stories. This is an entirely new experience to me, and I cannot tell you enough how much I appreciate the painstaking detail and thought you are putting into your efforts. It seems to me that again and again you achieve the exactly right atmosphere and angle in carrying out the story. . . . You people have a way of continually making me happy. I can't thank you enough!*"

Weird Science #19, May-June 1953

I DIDN'T HAVE $2,000 THINKING MONEY

by Ray Bradbury

In 1970, Ray Bradbury spoke at the first San Diego Comic-Con (then called the Golden State Comic Con, now officially called Comic-Con International: San Diego). He used the occasion to tell his own version of how his relationship with EC Comics came to be. The following is a transcript of Bradbury's account at that convention.

LET ME TELL YOU HOW I GOT INTO THE COMIC BOOK FIELD. Back in 1952, one of my fans sent me an adaptation of one of my stories that was in EC Comics — based on "Mars Is Heaven" — and said, "Here is your story. Look what they're doing. They're stealing your stories, and you're not getting credit for them. And you're not being paid. This is ridiculous." So I went to some lawyers, and I said, "Look, I want to sue EC Comics. They've been stealing all these stories of mine. I want to do something about it."

And the lawyer said, "Well give us $2,000, and we'll begin to think about it."

Well, I didn't have $2,000 thinking money at the time, and then I thought — I said, "I wonder what it's like to behave like a Christian, which we should all do more often. It's rather a comfortable and interesting feeling to test. So I said, "I think I will play the part of the Christian here. Let us approach these people with an open heart and say something nice to them and see what happens."

So I wrote a letter to EC Comics. I said, "Congratulations on your brilliant adaptation of my story in the current issue of — *Creeper of the Crypt* or whatever it was. And, uh, wonderful, wonderful work of the artist, a good adaptation — nice paper [audience laughs], good printing — ha ha! — decent price, you know." And I said, "Incidentally, you people are so busy. I realize how busy you are. You forgot to send me my adaptation check."

Three days later, the check arrived. [Audience laughs.]

So I immediately wrote them a second letter and said, "Hey, should I tell you something you don't know? A lot of people in your field have been stealing my stories lately — not you, of course. [Bradbury laughs; audience laughs.] Other people have been doing these criminal

Title Lettering by Wallace Wood

things with my st — why don't we make an approachment, here, for you to adapt my stories and keep my name on them, and protect the copyright, incidentally, which is very important. Because if you ever stop to think if you plagiarize a thing and then someone comes along and sees your plagiarism and plagiarizes it, and the third person comes along and plagiarizes the plagiarism of the plagiarism, where does the copyright go, hmm? Who owns what after a while? The thing becomes common, plagiaristic property." So I said, "Protect me. Let's adapt these stories.

"I think I will play the part of the Christian here."

So we made an agreement. And they did 30, 35 adaptations then, over a period of years. I got my name on the stories, I got the copyright protected, and that's how I wound up in EC Comics. And corrupted all of your lives.

[Audience laughs; Bradbury laughs.]

[Applause]

I had another, similar experience, almost the same year. That was a year for stealing, I'll tell you. A little producer, a fly-by-night Hollywood producer who will remain nameless, but who's really Hal Chester [audience laughs; Bradbury laughs], came to me with a project he was doing with Ray Harryhausen, the animator. And Ray is a dear old friend of mine. I don't know how many of you realize that we grew up together, and we were teenagers together in Los Angeles back in 1937, '38, '39, and on up. So we're still good friends. We've known each other about 33, 34 years.

We used to call each other on the phone at night, the way you do your best friend. We'd talk for hours about our dreams. And that's what being 18 and 19's all about, isn't it? And 16 and 17. And 20 and 21. Is having one decent friend you can call on the phone and say, "Oh, God! I dreamed this, I dreamed that. I want this for myself. I want to be the greatest artist the world ever knew. I want to be the greatest writer the world ever knew. I want to be the greatest actor the world ever knew. I want to be the greatest animator of dinosaurs! Since O'Brien, hmm? And that was his dream. That was his dream. And, it's kind of wonderful that out of all these conversations — I said, "Someday, I want to do a film with Orson Welles."

Well, my dream of working with Orson Welles has come true three times now. I worked with him on *Moby Dick*. He played a part in my script of *Moby Dick* that I did for John Huston. He, uh — I wrote the narration for *King of Kings*,

"... I realized this man had stolen my story, forgotten who he'd stolen it from, and called me in!"

which came out ten years ago from MGM. I didn't write the screenplay, I want you to know. I filled in the holes after the film was done. I came along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and wherever Philip Yordan left a pothole, I filled it in. [Audience chuckles.] So that Christ wouldn't stumble as he made it across — toward the city. And I worked with Welles on other occasions.

And, of course, Ray Harryhausen's story I don't have to tell you. His dream of becoming a great animator has been accomplished for many years now. And he's accepted by all of us, all around the world, as certainly one of the most talented, and certainly one of the nicest people you could possibly meet.

Well, anyway, Hal Chester had Ray Harryhausen on this film project, and he gave me the script, and he said, "How would you like to read this, and maybe come in and revise the script for it?"

I said, "Give me a room, I'll go in there, read it right now, I'll come out and tell you."

So they found an office somewhere in the studio. I went in there and spent an hour. Read the script, came out and went to Hal Chester.

He says, "What do you think of the script?"

I said, "Well, it's interesting."

He says, "You like it?"

"Yes, I like it, it's nice." You know.

"Well, you feel like revising it?"

I said, "Well, I might, I might."

I said, "Incidentally, it's very much like a story of mine called "The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms."

His jaw *dropped*!

His eyes popped out! His tie flew up! His ears wiggled!

And I realized this man had stolen my story, forgotten who he'd stolen it from, and called me in!

[Audience laughs; Bradbury laughs]

There was no trouble, no trouble. I didn't have to threaten to beat him up, or sue him, or anything. The next day — I left, I shook his hand. Very quickly. [Bradbury laughs; audience laughs.]

And I went home, and I got a telegram from him the next day: Please may we buy the rights to your story, "The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms," which appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1950.

So I sold him the rights to the story, and you've seen the film. And my story is — what, 42 seconds? In the middle of the film? There's about 42 seconds of the film that resemble my story. And then they used the title of my story.

So, those of you who see it, don't blame me. Next time you see Hal Chester, trip him, hmm? [Audience laughs.] 'Cause he did it all. Not an honorable man, at all. Not an honorable man.

So, those have been two experiences, rather humorous ones. ◎

YOU CAN LISTEN to the full recording of Ray Bradbury's 1970 San Diego Comic-Con talk here: https://comiconmemories.com/2010/01/08/recordings-of-the-1970-san-diego-comic-con-1-listen-to-them-here

April 19, 1952

The Editor
WEIRD-FANTASY
E.C.Publishing Co. Inc.
205 Lafayette
New York 12, New York

Dear Sir:

Just a note to remind you of an oversight. You have not as yet sent on the check for $50.00 to cover the use of secondary rights on my two stories THE ROCKET MAN and KALEIDOSCOPE which appeared in your WEIRD-FANTASY May-June'52.#13,with the cover-all title of HOME TO STAY. I feel this was probably overlooked in the general confusion of office-work, and look forward to your payment in the near future. My very best wishes to you.

Yours cordially,

Ray Bradbury

Ray Bradbury
10750 Clarkson Rd.
Los Angeles 64, Calif.

P.S. Have you ever considered doing an entire issue of your magazine based on my stories in DARK CARNIVAL, or my other two books THE ILLUSTRATED MAN and THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES? I'd be very interested in discussing this with you for some future issue. I think we could do an outstanding job here. May I hear from you? If you wish, I could send copies of my books on for perusal. R.B.

Ray Bradbury's cleverly understated letter of April 19, 1952. EC Comics publisher Bill Gaines knew he'd been caught, and he welcomed Bradbury's generous win-win face-saving solution. And so it (officially) began ..

RAY AND THE PULPS

by Ted White

Ray Bradbury was born in 1920, soon after the end of the First World War and less than a decade before the stock market crash that led to the Great Depression. That Depression dominated his second decade — his teenaged years — as it did virtually every American. It was inescapable.

But Ray discovered science fiction — a literature largely devoted to the future, which most people thought would be better. In the 1930s, most science fiction was published in just three magazines devoted to the genre: *Amazing Stories* (established in 1926), *Wonder Stories* (established as *Science Wonder Stories* in 1929), and *Astounding Stories/ Astounding Science Fiction* (established in 1930, now *Analog*). All three magazines had letters columns in which readers sometimes conversed with each other, and *Wonder Stories* sponsored the Science Fiction League, which encouraged readers to form clubs to promote science fiction. Out of this came science fiction fandom, a group of correspondents who turned to doing amateur publications called "fanzines" and, where population density allowed it, formed clubs. Two cities in the 1930s did form clubs, New York City and Los Angeles. The Los Angeles club (LASFS), formed in 1934, is the oldest still in existence.

Ray lived in the Los Angeles area, his family having moved there in 1934, and by his late teens, he had discovered the club and become an ardent science fiction fan. While still in high school, he began writing for local, Los Angeles–based fanzines, like Forrest Ackerman's *Imagination!* and *Mikros* in 1938. A year later, Ray was publishing his own fanzine, *Futuria Fantasia*, filling its pages with stories he'd written under a variety of pseudonyms.

Like many science fiction fans of his era (and later), Ray wanted to be a writer. He wrote for his high school's *Blue and White Daily*. He wrote for others' fanzines as well as his own. He is reputed to have pestered the professional science fiction writers at the club to look at his stories. He was persistent and prolific, burning with the energies of youth.

He sold his first story, "Pendulum," a collaboration with Henry Hasse, to *Super Science*

"... if you wanted to become a full-time writer ... in the early Forties, you started out in the pulps ..."

Stories in 1941. By then, there had been a pre–World War II explosion of new science fiction magazines, each thirsty for material and an ideal market for Bradbury — although wartime paper rationing did cut back on both the number of magazines and their frequency.

By the time Ray had begun to sell his stories, all science fiction magazines were published in the pulp format. This meant a roughly 8-inch by 10-inch page size, the interior printed on newsprint, and the edges of the pages were untrimmed ("deckle-edged" in the book trade, but looked down on in magazine publishing).

Pulp magazines were the forerunners of comic books in some aspects, not least the fact that pulp lines, like comic book lines, sold advertising in bulk. If you bought an ad, it appeared in all that publisher's magazines, with only their total circulation cited. Pulps, established shortly after the beginning of the 20th century, were born out of the dime novels of the previous century, and as such had always occupied the bottom rung of the ladder in publishing — until the advent of comic books. But while pulps had a disreputable air for some people, important writers like Raymond Chandler were coming out of the pages of pulp magazines like *Black Mask* — and the science fiction pulps always stood a bit to one side from the other pulps, attracting a somewhat different readership and cultivating their own writers, many of them hobbyist writers.

But if you wanted to become a full-time writer — a *professional* writer — in the early Forties, you started out in the pulps, with short stories, and if you were good enough, you aimed for the "slicks" — magazines like *Collier's* and *The Saturday Evening Post*.

This is exactly the path Ray followed successfully.

Take a look at the stories collected here.

"King of the Grey Spaces" was first published in *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* in 1943. That magazine was better known for republishing classic fantasy novels, but always ran a few new short stories.

I BIT MY LIPS. I WAS SO DARNED YOUNG, AND YOU CANNOT APPLY FOR SPACE WORK. YOU HAVE TO BE CHOSEN... CHOSEN...
C'MON! LET'S GO TO THE TELE-SHOW NOW!
YEAH! C'MON!
YOU GUYS GO AHEAD...

"King of the Grey Spaces!". Art by John Severin and Will Elder.

"Ray Bradbury's works have lived on as literature, transcending the medium in which they first appeared."

Another fantasy magazine was *Weird Tales* (established in 1923), known in the Thirties for publishing both Robert E. Howard's Conan stories and the stories of H.P. Lovecraft. "The Lake" first appeared in *Weird Tales* in 1944. Ray sold a number of other stories ("The Black Ferris," "The Handler," "The October Game") subsequently to that magazine, probably because it accepted offbeat stories which couldn't find a home in the purely science fiction magazines. Ray wrote science fiction, but did not limit himself to that genre.

And "I, Rocket" appeared the same year, 1944, in *Amazing Stories*.

Likewise, "The Man," which inspired "He Walked Among Us," appeared that year in *Thrilling Wonder Stories* (the successor to *Wonder Stories*).

But Ray did not confine himself to the science fiction and fantasy pulps. His "The Small Assassin" was first published in *Dime Mystery* in 1948, and "Touch and Go!" appeared the same year in *Detective Book*. Ray had, in his own way, become a pulp writer.

His ambitions were much higher, however. "The Silent Towns" appeared in 1949 in *Charm*, a slick magazine aimed mostly at women — which paid far better than the penny a word the pulps paid. And Bradbury's classic, "There Will Come Soft Rains," was *not* first published in a science fiction magazine, but in *Collier's*, in 1950.

When, I wonder, did Al Feldstein first encounter Ray's stories? Surely it was before Ray hit "the big time" with *Collier's*. At the time Al was adapting Bradbury to comics, few of those stories had been collected in book form. Al must have seen the magazines, both the science fiction and fantasy pulps and the mystery pulps, to find those stories

Bradbury began and developed his writing skills in the pulps. Their pages offered him the opportunity to tell his own unique stories, which I like to think he slipped through the cracks to get published. Always idiosyncratic, often mesmerizing and sometimes poetic ("There Will Come Soft Rains"), Ray Bradbury's works have lived on as literature, transcending the medium in which they first appeared. ◎

TED WHITE was born in 1938, the year Ray Bradbury's first stories were published — and became a science fiction fan in 1951, the year EC began adapting Bradbury's stories. Ted became a notable EC fan, and subsequently a major science fiction fan, publishing many fanzines. He became a professional science fiction writer and editor (*The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, *Amazing Stories*, *Fantastic*, *Heavy Metal*), although he's also been a radio deejay, a jazz critic, a rock critic, and a rock musician. He still writes and has had stories in *Analog* and *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, as well as *The Best American Mystery Stories* for 2019.

RAY AND READERS WRITE

by Thommy Burns

When Al Feldstein blended two of Ray Bradbury's stories to create "Home to Stay," he was up against a deadline. He was on a demanding story-a-day schedule, and he was probably working from "springboards" (often just scribbled notes) handed to him by his boss, EC publisher Bill Gaines, and discussed briefly before he was off to write a complete script by the close of business that day. He was not consciously setting in motion a chain of events that would make possible one of the most fruitful partnerships in comic book history, but that is exactly what happened.

When Bradbury was made aware of the "borrowing" of his "Kaleidoscope" and "The Rocket Man," he had the tact to classify it as an "oversight" and the good foresight to suggest that Gaines and Feldstein might consider further adaptations of his work. He was impressed with what they had done. (In fact, Gaines revealed in 1972 at the EC Fan-Addict Convention that "Bradbury himself admitted [that "Home to Stay"] was better than the two originals.") Gaines happily took Bradbury up on the suggestion, and Feldstein began writing official adaptations of Bradbury's stories for EC Comics. The results were timeless, moving, and, frankly, astonishing.

Gaines and Feldstein were delighted to formalize the partnership. As Gaines wrote in a May 1952 letter to Bradbury, "Al and I have long been admirers of yours ... and sincerely believe you to be just about tops in the entire fantasy field." Once the EC adaptations began appearing regularly, Bradbury was equally appreciative, often writing to praise not only Feldstein, but also the artists who worked on his stories. In August of 1952, he wrote "please show this letter to Jack Davis and Joe Orlando. I want to thank them for the painstaking work they did on 'The Coffin' and 'The Long Years.' And please thank Al [Feldstein] for the layout work and the adaptations themselves!"

In a subsequent letter in October, he praised the work of George Evans on "The Small Assassin," and Jack Davis again (this time for "Let's Play Poison!"), and in November, he wrote directly to Wallace Wood and Jack Kamen to express his "thanks and gratitude for the really

beautiful work you are doing on my stories." He goes on to write that he "was particularly pleased and delighted with 'Mars Is Heaven' and 'Zero Hour.' It seemed to me that again and again you both achieved the exactly right atmosphere in carrying out the story." He called Johnny Craig's work on "Touch and Go" "quite amazing," and said that Severin and Elder, on "King of the Grey Spaces!," had "a very fresh technique." He declared Bernard Krigstein's "The Flying Machine" to be "the finest single piece of art drawing I've seen in the comics for years. Beautiful work; I was so pleased and touched by the concern for detail."

Bradbury's praise wasn't limited to stories adapting his own, writing (in a February 1953 letter excerpted in *Weird Fantasy* #20) that "Judgment Day," a Feldstein-authored tale of bigotry between orange and blue robots, "should be required reading for every man, woman, and child in the United States. You've done a splendid thing here, and deserve the highest commendation." Feldstein's classic tale of racial intolerance clearly touched a nerve with Bradbury, who wrote again only days later: "by all means use my quote on 'Judgment Day.' The story deserves to be praised by any thinking person. There are a lot of nasty little bigots around town I'd like to force this story on." It's hard to imagine how honored Feldstein must have felt — he told biographer Grant Geissman that adapting Bradbury's stories "became the love of my life ... that was where I think my writing really started to improve, because I was so immersed in his writing."

It's easy to discern an elevation in Feldstein's craft after he started working on the Bradbury material — "Judgment Day" is but one example of a noticeable direct influence. Even on well-worn horror "house plots," Feldstein began to display flourishes of Bradbury-esque flowery prose, and "Harvest" (published alongside Bradbury's "A Sound of Thunder" in *Weird Science-Fantasy* #25) could almost be mistaken for a Bradbury adaptation, so thoroughly had Feldstein embraced his style. "The thing that was controlling me was the respect for Bradbury's style," Feldstein said at the 1972 EC Fan-Addict Convention. "I wanted to get it all in, all I could. Sometimes it got a little wordy. But from Bradbury's point of view, he was very pleased, because I think we captured his stories."

"There are a lot of nasty little bigots around town I'd like to force this story on."

Interestingly, not all EC readers shared the enthusiasm. The letters page of *Weird Science* #19 was devoted entirely to letters of comment on Bradbury, with eight being positive and four being, if not wholly negative, at least unappreciative. These are met with an editorial suggestion that they "postpone discussion of this situation until we have a better idea of the proportion of our readers who agree in essence with the above four correspondents." *Weird Science* #20 revisits this discussion with oddly specific metrics, presumably based on total letters received: 34% of EC readers "love" Bradbury, 47% "can either take him or leave him," and 19% think he "stinks!" This is followed by a renewed plea (first suggested in the early days of EC's "New Trend" line) for readers to read the stories aloud "for a

full appreciation of Bradbury's style." In closing, the 34% are assured there will be more Bradbury adaptations, the 47% are assured that there will be fewer adaptations in total, and the remaining 19% are advised that when an issue does include a Bradbury adaptation, they will still have three other stories to enjoy.

What these minor controversies did not address (or even hint at) was that Bradbury himself had grown reticent about his very public involvement with EC Comics. In a private letter to Gaines, Bradbury had already expressed concern about criticisms he had received over the perception that he was "writing for the comics." Though he says he was "upset, irritated, and angered" by this, he nevertheless felt he had to ask that his name be removed from the covers of the EC issues his stories appeared in. Given the reader debate over the Bradbury adaptations, it's likely that Gaines may have been somewhat relieved, but the sheer quality of the adaptations (and the exceptional art they inspired from the EC artists) insured that they would continue.

The fact that Bradbury had struggled with the association, and gone to great lengths not to offend Gaines, gives the impression that his appreciation for the EC adaptations remained strong. He certainly seemed to take pride in the vindication he felt when two paperback collections of EC's Bradbury adaptations were published in 1965 and 1966 (*The Autumn People* and *Tomorrow Midnight*, both from Ballantine Books). In his introduction to *The Autumn People*, Bradbury wrote, "having these comic adaptations of my stories reprinted in book form is a good and happy experience for me. Intellectual snobs will no doubt be shocked. Those with widespread, happy tastes will accept, as I accept, this new form — faithfully, and in many cases beautifully done — of some of my old stories."

He goes on, in his introduction for the next book, to say: "Right now, you hold in your hands a copy of 'Tomorrow Midnight,' stories of mine adapted into comic-strip form by Al Feldstein and well done — in some cases superbly done — by the old EC Comics illustrators. It goes almost without saying how pleased I am to have this second volume available, along with 'The Autumn People'."

I can only imagine how pleased Bradbury — and Feldstein, and Gaines, and all the artists — would be with the volume you hold in your hands at this moment. The timelessness, the beauty, the poetry, and the stunning range of emotions are, indeed, superbly done.

"These stories, then, are ways of figuring a part of myself, which means also a part of you," Bradbury wrote in 1965. "I hope you like them." ◎

THOMMY BURNS is the founding administrator of the EC Fan-Addict Club on Facebook and often moderates or participates on EC-oriented panels at comic book conventions. He appears frequently as a guest speaker on pop culture and comics-related podcasts and livestreams, and he co-hosts the EC Fan-Addict Podcast and YouTube channel. He also provides detailed commentaries for *The Fantagraphics EC Artists' Library* series and has written about EC Comics in *The Life and Legend of Wallace Wood* Volume 1 and *The Comics Journal Library Volume 10: The EC Artists Part 2* (all from Fantagraphics), and *The EC Covers Artists Edition* (IDW).

BOTH "Judgment Day" and "Harvest" can be found in *Judgment Day And Other Stories*, Volume 9 in *The Fantagraphics EC Artists' Library*.

COSMIC CORRESPONDENCE

Well, the mail is really rolling in now on the Bradbury adaptations, and here are some comments on "The Long Years," which appeared in Weird Science No. 17 . .

Dear Editors,

I was very pleased with your adaptation of "The Long Years." You changed the original story very little, thus retaining the quality and impression that Bradbury is noted for. Let's have more . . . lots more!

Ronald Voigt
St. Louis, Mo.

. . . I want to compliment you especially for the way you stuck to the original story unlike the way most adapters do! I went over the original and found your version was almost word for word. Congratulations.

David Cressman
Norristown, Pa.

. . . You want to know about Ray Bradbury? Well I think "he's got it!" THE LONG YEARS was magnificent.

Wiley Gunter
Bakersfield, Calif.

. . . Ray is really a wonderful writer, and you've got something in that guy. Congratulations, Mr. B., and thanks for making E.C. mags so much more enjoyable.

Mrs. Thomas Fisher
Mineola, L. I.

. . . I'm writing this letter on behalf of my numerous E.C. fan friends and myself to thank you very much for your fine adaptations of my favorite s-f author, Ray Bradbury. When comparing your mag with the slick 25c and 35c printed types, we find your stories are just as high in quality as theirs. A fine job, with Feldstein writing, and Wood, Kamen, Orlando, and Williamson illustrating!

David S. Spiel
Milton, Mass.

. . . I thought a comic version would dim the Bradbury brilliance, but it came across like an arc lamp.

Dave Foley
Brooklyn, N. Y.

. . . As an old Bradbury fan, I enjoyed "The Long Years" even more in its comic form than I did when I read it originally. I believe my congrats should be shared therefore between Feldstein and Orlando, as well as Ray.

Fred Lamb
Knoxville, Tenn.

. . . Never having read any stories by Ray Bradbury, I was looking forward to your first adaptation, due to the big "play-up" you gave him. I wasn't disappointed. He's got a new fan. How about HIS biography, like the ones you did for your artists?

Jean Freeman
Tulsa, Okla.

Bradbury's biog was already in the works and scheduled for this issue when your letter arrived, Jean! See the inside front cover!

And now for a minority report! As we mentioned when we first announced them, we were a wee bit apprehensive about our plans to adapt Bradbury stories. Frankly, we suspected that some of our veteran readers might not enjoy or fully appreciate Mr. B.'s distinctive type of imaginative writing! Apparently our fears were somewhat justified:

. . . So far I have read the two stories by Ray Bradbury that you've printed. Frankly, they leave me up in the air. I don't get any pleasure from a story that I can't figure out.

Ruth Ohnsman
Pittsburgh, Pa.

. . . Very interesting, but it was a bit over my head . . .

Colin B. Pitblado
Newington, Conn.

. . . The mother, the two daughters, and the son were robots, weren't they?

Douglas Wilson
Royal Oak, Mich.

. . . I sure hate to say that you guys are wrong, but I think that "The Long Years" was a poor selection. A friend of mine, who is pretty hep on s-f, failed to get the point of the story. I know that Hathaway's family were robots that he had constructed after his real family died, but my friend did not. For the first time, he did not enjoy one of your s-f stories.

Jeff Schneider
Beverly Hills, Calif.

May we, if you'll permit, postpone discussion of this situation until we have a better idea of the proportion of our readers who agree in essence with the above four correspondents.—editors

. . . In "The Long Years," Hathaway went out every night and looked at the earth. But when I look at the sky, I can't see Mars. Why?

Lee J. Brezinski
(no address given)

If you know where and when to look, Lee, you sure can see Mars (and it IS slightly reddish!), as well as Venus, Jupiter, and Saturn. (Hint: if it twinkles, it's a star . . . if it doesn't twinkle it's a planet!)

Before closing, a suggestion! As mentioned last issue, over 500 comic titles are now jamming up the wholesalers and, in turn, the retailers, who simply cannot properly handle this impossible quantity. In desperation, many newsdealers are returning bundles of comics to their wholesalers UNOPENED! Some of these bundles contain your E.C. mags, making it hopelessly impossible for you to OBTAIN them, or for us to SELL them! ASK YOUR NEWSDEALER TO DISPLAY HIS E.C. MAGS. IF HE HAS NONE, HE CAN GET 'EM FROM HIS WHOLESALER! NO SHORTAGE . . . JUST NOT PROPER DISPLAY! IF NO LUCK IN INTIMIDATING LOCAL NEWSDEALER, WRITE, PHONE OR WIRE US . . . (or subscribe! Six issues . . . full annual supply . . . 75c)! CRA-ZY! Address:

The Editors
Weird Science
Room 706, Dept. 19
225 Lafayette St.
N. Y. C. 12, N. Y.

The letters column of *Weird Science* #19 was devoted to readers' comments on EC's adaptation of Bradbury's "The Long Years." (Spoiler alert: read the story, starting on page 105, first. Then take a look at the scans of Joe Orlando's original art for that story, starting on page 277.)

THE DEAN OF EC SCIENCE FICTION ARTISTS

by Bill Mason

AFTER SPENDING MOST OF **1951** restlessly changing his style, alternately refining and coarsening the self-assured, effortless-looking manner of his early EC stories, Wallace Wood suddenly, in four stories in the May-June 1952 issues of the EC science fiction and war titles, brought eye, mind, and hand into perfect sync, and emerged as one of the great masters of comics illustration.

"Custer's Last Stand," "War of 1812!," "He Walked Among Us" (and its classic tie-in cover, p. 287), and "Home to Stay!" (p. 135) are more than the first fruits of Wood's hard-won technical mastery: they are graphic expressions of everything Wood knew and felt about life and art, and they are harbingers of a period of artistic growth and achievement that lasted almost three years.

It is part of the essence of Wood's distinctive brand of creativity that his coming of age as a draftsman should be defined by a metallic sharpness and clarity in his inking and a reckless profusion of detail work, exuberant ornamentation, and uncategorizable visual invention. Moreover, as his work increased in poetry and dramatic power, his vision grew more precise and specific.

A description of Wood at war can be found in an expanded version of this article, "A Thousand Rays in Your Belly" in *The Life and Legend of Wallace Wood* Volume 1 (Fantagraphics, 2017), so, in the context of this book, let us focus on intergalactic Wood. The obvious place to begin is the first of those two science fiction stories, "He Walked Among Us," the wryly reverent secularist allegory of Christianity co-plotted by EC publisher William M. Gaines and EC editor Al Feldstein and scripted by Feldstein, from an idea sparked by, but not truly adapted from, Ray Bradbury's short story "The Man" (*The Illustrated Man*, 1951). (Bradbury would catch them on their next story, "Home to Stay!", which was more obviously derivative of his work.)

"He Walked Among Us" is Wood's masterpiece in the medieval craft-guild sense of the term, for it comes at the end of a period of studious journeyman realism that had begun eight months earlier, when Wood

took over (from Feldstein) the lead-off story slots in *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy*.

For the most part, Wood had been concentrating on improving his figure drawing and anatomy: mastering difficult poses, composing effective figure groups, putting real flesh, bones, and sinews beneath his characters' clothing, learning to give them consistent facial features without resorting to caricatural shortcuts.

But by the early winter of 1952, Wood's self-imposed period of apprenticeship was definitely over. All that remained lacking was story material deserving of such bravura treatment, and Gaines and Feldstein, in one of the happiest conjunctions in comics history, entered their glory years at the same time as Wood.

By the time of these mid-1952 stories, all three men — Gaines as co-plotter, Feldstein as co-plotter/scriptwriter, and Wood as artist — had finally attained a level of achievement that they had been straining for since the debut of EC's science fiction titles in 1950.

Like Bradbury, they had become poets, critics, and mythographers of American life. Bradbury's lyricism was echoed in Feldstein's increasingly ornate prose style, which, in turn, found its visual objective correlative in Wood's "beautiful clutter" period.

The style that Wood adopted for "He Walked Among Us" treats everything suggested by the script with a loving and intelligent attention to the surfaces and textures of his imagined world and to the human drama unfolding within it. Wood's vast private stock of minutely accurate visual information and enigmatic personal symbols is drawn upon in every panel with the genial disregard for period accuracy of the great masters of late Gothic and early Renaissance art. It delights but does not surprise us to see a grizzled Polish hetman, replete with mustachios and a two-inch mohawk, rubbing shoulders with a villainous-looking Roman soldier with feathers adorning his helmet. Double-handled pitchers and sculptured faces (both oft-repeated Woodian motifs) crowd floors, shelves, gateways, walls. Pre-Columbian textiles, barbaric stone carvings, and Greco-Roman bronzes go unnoticed by Central Asian beauties holding the leashes of their miniature horses with studied carelessness. Pterodactyls wheel and soar above the battlements of Arthurian castles.

THE RAGGED OLD BEGGAR STAGGERED TO THE PUBLIC FOUNTAIN AND FILLED HIS BOWL WITH WATER! MEANWHILE, KRAFT TOOK OUT A MILK-ANHYDRATE PILL FROM BENEATH HIS ROBE! WHEN THE OLD ONE RETURNED, JERRY PASSED HIS HAND OVER THE BOWL... DROPPING IN THE PILL...
THERE! DRINK THAT!
IT... IT'S A MIRACLE! MILK! YOU TURNED THE WATER TO MILK!
OTHER ALIENS GATHERED AROUND KRAFT, WIDE-EYED IN AMAZEMENT! MANY OF THEM WERE HUNGRY AND SICK! JERRY FELT SORRY FOR THEM! AGAIN AND AGAIN HE DROPPED INTO THEIR OUTSTRETCHED BOWLS OF WATER VARIOUS DEHYDRATED FOOD-PILLS...
THE STRANGER'S TURNED MY WATER TO SOUP!
...BREAD!
...MEAT!
HE IS THE ONE WHO CURED MY SICK CHILD!
4
"He Walked Among Us". Art by Wallace Wood

THE BOY'S FACE BRIGHTENS! HE SMILES AS HE WATCHES THE SHOOTING STAR STREAK ACROSS THE NIGHT SKY! A CHILDISH GIGGLE ESCAPES FROM HIS TINY LIPS! HE SIGHS...
HURRY, JIMMY! MAKE A WISH!
I WISH... I WISH...
"Home to Stay!". Art by Wallace Wood

Gaines's 1972 comment on the story concept of "He Walked Among Us" ("I've always said that if there were a Christ, and he did what he was supposed to have done, he must have been a very fine man. Whether there was a Christ and whether he did what he was supposed to have done, I have no way of knowing. But I'll say 'if'.") applies with equal force to the spirit of Wood's visuals. No need to invoke the shopworn phrase *suspension of disbelief* in this strange and ravishing place: like Gaines, Wood has already uttered a definitive and world-engendering *if*.

Next, I turn to EC's most famous (and notorious) unauthorized Bradbury swipe, "Home to Stay!", a combination of "The Rocket Man" and "Kaleidoscope" (both from *The Illustrated Man*, 1951) "which Bradbury himself admitted was better than the originals," as Gaines once cheerfully noted, "but he didn't feel that it was so good that we shouldn't pay him." (Bradbury and

SURE, ELAINE! I UNDERSTAND! I'M A PERFECT STRANGER TO HIM! I CAN'T BLAME HIM FOR...FOR...HEY, FELLER! LOOK! FOR YOU!
LOOK WHAT DADDY BROUGHT YOU, JIMMY! A...SOB...A ROCKET-SHIP! SOB! JUST LIKE THE ONE HE...SOB...SOB.
2
"Home to Stay!". Art by Wallace Wood.

Gaines came to an arrangement shortly thereafter for EC to formally adapt Bradbury's stories — no more swiping.)

"Home to Stay!" draws its poignancy and sadness from the same vein of old-fashioned family sentiment that inspired "King of the Grey Spaces!" and "The Million Year Picnic" (both of which were adapted by EC with splendidly appropriate art by Severin and Elder and can be found in these pages) that is part of the persistent Christian/Romantic strain in Bradbury's work.

The appeal of such material to Gaines can be traced partly to Gaines's erratic but genuine humanist faith in the attractiveness of virtue and heroism and partly to the kinship he felt with Bradbury as a writer who was willing to give human folly, vanity, and self-deception their due by entertaining the possibility that his own Christian-humanist view of life might be based on nothing (in stories such as "Mars Is Heaven," and "There Will Come Soft Rains...", both discussed further on, and "Jack-in-the-Box," a peculiarly horrifying story that EC never adapted).

For Gaines, an atheist with a gut-level belief in original sin, the natural response to wicked-

THE BOY'S FACE BRIGHTENS! HE SMILES AS HE WATCHES THE SHOOTING STAR STREAK ACROSS THE NIGHT SKY AND FADE AWAY AS IT BURNS OUT! A CHILDISH GIGGLE ESCAPES FROM HIS TINY LIPS ...
I WISH... I WISH MY DADDY WOULD COME HOME TONIGHT... HOME TO STAY!
THE END

"Home to Stay!". Art by Wallace Wood.

ness and injustice was denunciation and prophetic calls to repentance: "If we ever answered a letter that we were not trying to teach anything with our science fiction stories, we were lying. On the contrary, science fiction traditionally has been a great vehicle for an author to try to teach a moral or ethical lesson, and we certainly were doing that throughout the entire history of EC's science fiction stuff."

For Wood, "Home to Stay!", a deeply moral story in which there are no evil characters, was an opportunity to dramatize moral beauty by reconstituting it as physical beauty — a tactic that worked well for Botticelli but which has proven to be the kiss of death for countless comics artists and illustrators. But Wood, in giving the mother and the little boy faces of radiant, angelic sweetness in the framing sequences and in showing the father's face aglow with love and happiness in the homecoming scene at the bottom of page 2, knew perfectly well what he was doing, since he brought to the Bradbury/Gaines/Feldstein-plotted script an avid Bradbury reader's feeling for the stories on which it was based. (Wood, at the EC Fan-Addict Convention, 1972: "I had read those stories some time before. And I must say they were very good adaptations. The story was all there; there were less words. It got the feeling, and it translated very well into comics.")

"Mars Is Heaven!". Art by Wallace Wood.

"... 'Home to Stay!' ... was an opportunity to dramatize moral beauty by reconstituting it as physical beauty ..."

"Home to Stay!" demonstrates the suppleness and range of Wood's grand manner as a science fiction illuminator, and his graphic priorities for the story are necessarily different from those he would adopt for "There Will Come Soft Rains..." and "Mars Is Heaven!" ("I wanted it to have the period look of that time, you know, the decorating ...").

For "Home to Stay!," Wood became an "actor's director" to an unprecedented degree, lavishing his attention and skill on facial expressions and bodily gestures outside of his standard repertory, keeping long shots and figure groups to a minimum, avoiding for the most part the usual comic book cues for instant emotion, relegating his beautiful clutter to the *mise en scène* of the first and last pages and to a few symbolic touches: earth-hugging dwarf trees, the boy's toy rocket, a statuette of a drummer, a huge Woodian eyeball looming outside a window to register a moment of family happiness.

In his excitement at taking comics into areas that had previously been the domain of classic American literature, Gaines took it for granted that big themes demanded big captions and that great visuals were inspired by great material, not by the amount of available space.

(Gaines, at that same convention on EC's wordiness: "This is getting into almost a philosophical discussion on the problem, but perhaps we shouldn't have been comic magazines. Perhaps we should have been profusely illustrated text magazines of some sort. But ... our business was comics, and to tell the kind of stories that we wanted to tell ... and to tell them as beautifully as they were told, required a lot of words. So therefore, they ended up a little crampy on the pictures, and yet they got the effect that was desired.")

Wood appears to have felt entirely at home with the Gaines/Feldstein approach to comics storytelling, in which, as Feldstein has noted, "the pictures just went along for the ride." ("We developed short fingers because of that," was Wood's amiable reply to Feldstein's admission that "the science fiction allowed me to do a little more creative writing, sometimes at the expense of the space left for the artist to draw in.")

The extraordinary degree of surface articulation in Wood's solid backgrounds — the rocket interiors of the classic science fiction covers and stories, the "twenty-first century solar home" in "Home to Stay!" and other examples in other stories — is the plastic aftermath of countless acts of visual excavation. It is as if Wood imagined every blank panel as a block of solid matter to be hollowed out into a sculptural conception of incredible complexity, in which the freestanding figures and objects inhabit a highly charged, more intensely realized variant of Eisner's urban-gothic, dead-end space. The rocket walls bombard the spacemen and hardware with visual energy, which they, in turn, bounce back to the rocket walls.

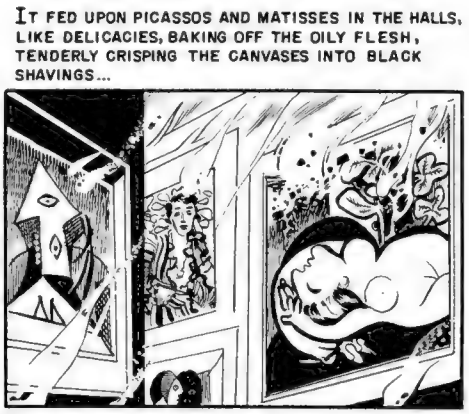
His two authorized Bradbury adaptations are the ultimate examples of Wood's Gothic

style. "Mars Is Heaven!" and "There Will Come Soft Rains..." combine themes, settings, and techniques of Wood's greatest and most deeply felt EC stories with parallel and recurrent themes in Bradbury's work. "Art is a lie that reveals to us the truth," said Picasso — but what if the truth turns out to be that the external world is a dream, an illusion, a hypnotic screen, an elaborate artifice? Bradbury's endings — the melting away of the imaginary town in "Mars Is Heaven!" and the death of the house in "There Will Come Soft Rains..." — must have made Wood think twice before he drew them, for the final panels of both stories are symbolic destructions of Wood's own elaborate artifices, reminders that the world he created when he sat down at his drawing board was itself a hypnotic screen.

But love, death, and disillusionment are the quintessential Woodian themes, and Wood's "Green Lake, Wisconsin" (as Bradbury's "Green Bluff, Illinois" is mysteriously renamed in Gaines and Feldstein's adaptation of "Mars Is Heaven!"), is reconstructed in loving detail from the iron deer on page 1 to the gramophone horn at the bottom of page 6.

In "There Will Come Soft Rains..." the cluttered topography and American Gothic fretwork of "Mars Is Heaven!" are replaced by an ultra-modern dream house. (Wood, 1972: "I did a lot of research for that story ... everything that looked remotely like futuristic settings. I probably worked harder on that story than anything I ever did.")

But even in 1952, the future was not what it used to be, and Wood's house, both inside and out, suggests an amalgam of one of Frank Lloyd Wright's "prairie houses" of the first decade of the 20th century and Gerrit Rietveld's 1924 Schröder residence. More up-to-date are the


IT FED UPON PICASSOS AND MATISSES IN THE HALLS, LIKE DELICACIES, BAKING OFF THE OILY FLESH, TENDERLY CRISPING THE CANVASES INTO BLACK SHAVINGS...

"There Will Come Soft Rains...", page 6, panel 2. Ink over graphite on Bristol board. Wallace Wood (1927-1981).

bathtub, ashtray, and living room sofas on page 4, which are based on the curvilinear, freeform designs of Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen. Explicitly futuristic touches like the kitchen machines, cleaning robots, bed-warming cones, and fire extinguishers owe more to Roy Krenkel's spacecraft hardware and architectural fantasies than they do to Wood's rocket interiors.

"There Will Come Soft Rains..." is profoundly moving because Wood obviously loved the doomed inanimate objects that are all that remain of the men and women who made them. Nowhere is this more evident than in Wood's freely drawn versions of paintings by Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse on page 6, panel 2. As I looked up the titles and dates of the originals, it struck me that the artists and the people in the paintings were all living in 1952. Olga Khokhlova, Picasso's first wife and the inspiration for the fearsome *Woman in Red Armchair* (1929, left side of Wood's panel), painted after the bitter break-up of her marriage to Picasso, died in 1955. Marie-Thérèse Walter, the model for *Nude in a Black Armchair (Nu au Fauteuil Noir)* (1932, right side of Wood's panel) and *Seated Woman* (1927, lower center of Wood's

Nude in a Black Armchair, 1932. Oil on canvas, 64" x 51". Pablo Picasso (1881–1973).

panel), committed suicide in 1977, 50 years after her first meeting with Picasso and five years after Picasso's death in 1973. Matisse, whose *Woman With Blue Jewel* (1937) appears in the upper center, died in 1954. Hélène Galitzine, the Russian princess who posed for that painting, died in 1966 in Solothurn, Switzerland. A homier and perhaps more pathetic detail is the nursery, with its glowing walls of imaginary wild animals that really move: a gentler version of the nursery in Bradbury's "The Veldt" (*The Illustrated Man*, 1951).

From 1952 to 1954, Wallace Wood lived at his drawing board and produced a formidable and varied body of work, becoming, in Gaines's words, "the dean of EC science fiction." Yet in that time, he said nothing about it that any of his EC colleagues remembered. What he left for us, though, is right here in these pages: easy to love, easy to recognize as totally serious and dedicated, hard to describe — even harder as it gets better and more varied.

"... love, death, and disillusionment are the quintessential Woodian themes ..."

The qualities I value most in Wallace Wood's art are the love and intelligence with which he rendered small details and the tragic sense of life that suffuses his greatest work. That work has been part of my life since 1952, and I find that my love for it has grown stronger over the years. I hope that this essay will encourage you to discover or rediscover Wood at EC for yourself. You won't find a better place to begin than with these authorized (and unauthorized) Wood adaptations of Ray Bradbury stories. ◎

BILL MASON taught in the humanities department at Dawson College, Montreal, Canada, from 1971 until his retirement in 2015. He began writing about comics in 1954, when he had a letter published in *Weird Science-Fantasy* #27. He wrote extensively about Wallace Wood's EC career in "A Thousand Rays in Your Belly" in *The Life and Legend of Wallace Wood* Volume 1 (Fantagraphics, 2017), from which this article is excerpted.

THE LONG YEARS!

ORIGINAL ART SHOWCASE BY JOE ORLANDO

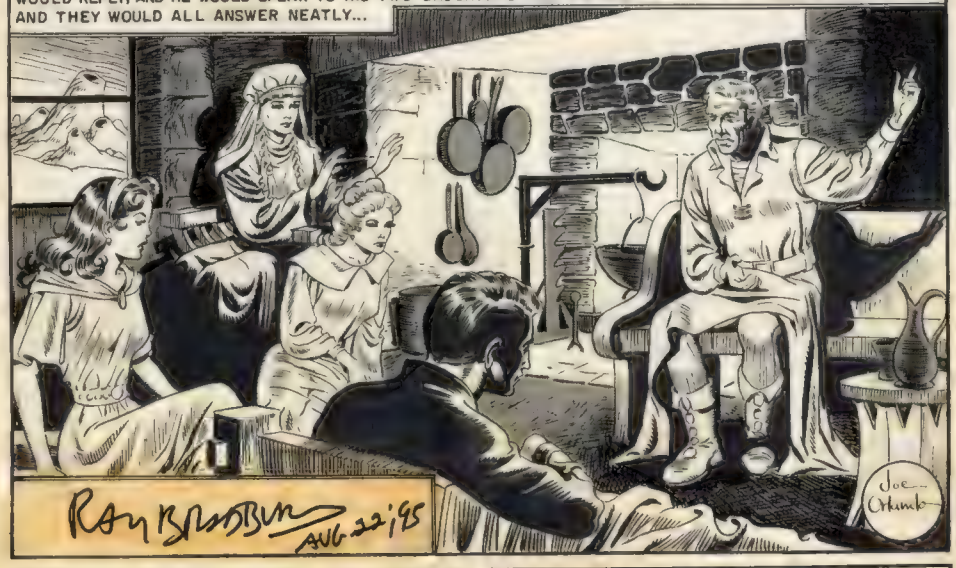
The following story is newly scanned for this book from Joe Orlando's original artboards to show the fine detail of the original artwork. From the collection of Grant Geissman.

USA
25

L-1

The LONG YEARS!

WHENEVER THE WIND CAME THROUGH THE MARTIAN SKY, HE AND HIS FAMILY WOULD SIT IN THEIR STONE HUT AND WARM THEIR HANDS OVER A WOOD FIRE! THE WIND WOULD STIR THE CANAL WATERS AND ALMOST BLOW THE STARS OUT OF THE SKY, BUT MR. HATHAWAY WOULD SIT CONTENTED AND TALK TO HIS WIFE, AND HIS WIFE WOULD REPLY, AND HE WOULD SPEAK TO HIS TWO DAUGHTERS AND HIS SON ABOUT THE OLD DAYS ON EARTH, AND THEY WOULD ALL ANSWER NEATLY...



MR. HATHAWAY WENT OUT INTO THE MARTIAN NIGHT! IT WAS THE TWENTIETH YEAR AFTER THE GREAT WAR! MARS WAS A TOMB PLANET! WHETHER OR NOT EARTH WAS THE SAME WAS A MATTER OF MUCH DEBATE FOR HATHAWAY AND HIS FAMILY ON THOSE LONG MARTIAN NIGHTS! HE CALLED INTO THE HUT...

HATHAWAY GAZED UP AT EARTH BURNING GREEN IN THE WINDY SKY! THEN HE LOOKED ACROSS THE LONG-DEAD SEA BOTTOMS...

WEIRD SCIENCE

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HATHAWAY MOVED QUIETLY DOWN THROUGH THE SERIES OF RUINS...

WELL, I'M GOOD FOR *ANOTHER* TWENTY YEARS IF I'M CAREFUL! *SOMEONE* MIGHT COME! EITHER *ACROSS* THE DEAD SEAS OR OUT OF *SPACE* IN A *ROCKET* ON A LITTLE THREAD OF RED FLAME!

HE CAME TO A SOLITARY MARTIAN GRAVEYARD... A SERIES OF SMALL HEXAGONAL STONES ON A HILL SWEPT BY A LONELY WIND! HE LOOKED DOWN AT THE GRAVES WITH CRUDE WOODEN CROSSES ON THEM, AND NAMES...

TEARS DID NOT COME TO MR. HATHAWAY'S EYES! THEY HAD DRIED LONG AGO...

DO YOU *FORGIVE* ME FOR WHAT I'VE *DONE*? I WAS VERY MUCH *ALONE*! YOU *DO* UNDERSTAND, *DON'T* YOU?

HE RETURNED TO THE STONE HUT... AND ONCE MORE, JUST BEFORE GOING IN, SHADED HIS EYES, SEARCHING THE BLACK SKY...

ONE KEEPS *WAITING* AND *WAITING* AND *LOOKING*, AND *ONE* NIGHT, *PERHAPS*...

THERE WAS A TINY RED FLAME ON THE SKY! HE STEPPED AWAY FROM THE LIGHT OF THE HUT...

...AND ONE LOOKS *AGAIN*!

THE TINY RED FLAME WAS STILL THERE...

IT WASN'T THERE *LAST* NIGHT!

HE STUMBLED AND FELL, PICKED HIMSELF UP, RAN BEHIND THE HUT, SWIVELED THE TELESCOPE, AND POINTED IT AT THE SKY...

A MINUTE LATER... AFTER A LONG, WILD STARING... HE APPEARED IN THE LOW DOOR OF THE HUT! THE WIFE AND THE TWO DAUGHTERS AND THE SON TURNED THEIR HEADS TO HIM! FINALLY HE WAS ABLE TO SPEAK...

I HAVE *GOOD NEWS*! I HAVE LOOKED AT THE *SKY*! A *ROCKET* IS COMING TO TAKE US ALL *HOME*! IT WILL BE HERE IN THE EARLY MORNING!

THEN, MR. HATHAWAY BEGAN TO CRY GENTLY... 2

WEIRD SCIENCE

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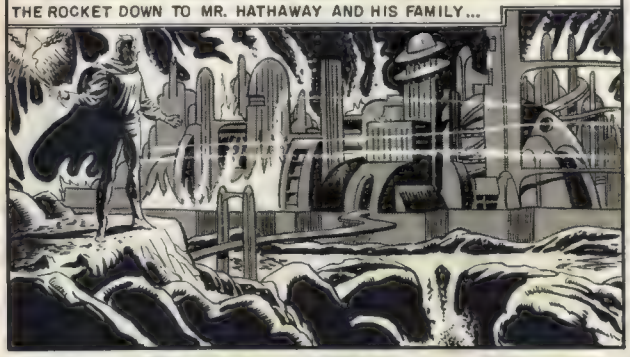
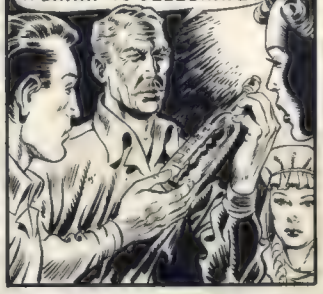
27

HE BURNED WHAT WAS LEFT OF *NEW* NEW YORK THAT MORNING AT THREE! HE TOOK A TORCH AND MOVED INTO THE PLASTIC CITY, AND WITH THE FLAME TOUCHED THE WALLS HERE AND THERE! THE CITY BLOOMED UP IN GREAT TOSSES OF HEAT AND LIGHT! IT WAS A SQUARE MILE OF ILLUMINATION, BIG ENOUGH TO BE SEEN OUT IN SPACE! IT WOULD BECKON THE ROCKET DOWN TO MR. HATHAWAY AND HIS FAMILY...



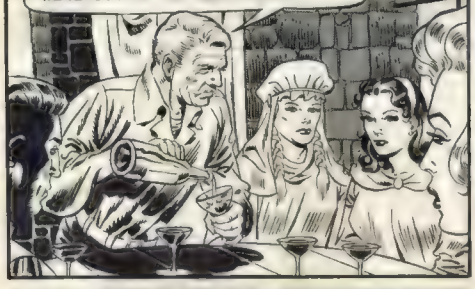
HIS HEART BEATING RAPIDLY WITH PAIN, HE RETURNED TO THE HUT! HE HELD UP A DUSTY BOTTLE INTO THE LIGHT...

SEE? *WINE* I SAVED, JUST FOR TONIGHT! I KNEW THAT SOMEDAY SOMEONE WOULD FIND US! WE'LL HAVE A *DRINK* TO *CELEBRATE!*

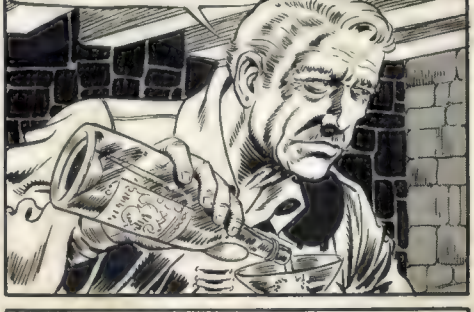


HE POURED FIVE GLASSES FULL...

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME! REMEMBER THE DAY THE WAR BROKE? TWENTY YEARS AND SEVEN MONTHS AGO! AND ALL THE ROCKETS WERE CALLED HOME FROM MARS! AND YOU AND I AND THE CHILDREN WERE OUT IN THE MOUNTAINS...



WE RAN OUR HORSES... ALMOST KILLING THEM, REMEMBER? BUT WE GOT TO THE CITY A WEEK LATE! EVERYONE WAS GONE! AMERICA HAD BEEN DESTROYED! EVERY ROCKET HAD LEFT WITHOUT WAITING FOR STRAGGLERS! REMEMBER? REMEMBER?



HE LIFTED HIS GLASS...

AND IT TURNED OUT WE WERE THE *ONLY* ONES LEFT! LORD, LORD, HOW THE YEARS *PASS!* I COULDN'T HAVE *STOOD* IT WITHOUT *YOU* HERE... *ALL* OF YOU! I'D HAVE *KILLED* MYSELF *WITHOUT* YOU! BUT *WITH* YOU... IT WAS WORTH WAITING! HERE'S TO US, THEN... AND TO OUR LONG WAIT TOGETHER!

HE DRANK! THE WIFE AND THE TWO DAUGHTERS AND THE SON RAISED THEIR GLASSES TO THEIR LIPS! THE WINE RAN DOWN OVER THE CHINS OF ALL FOUR OF THEM...

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WEIRD SCIENCE

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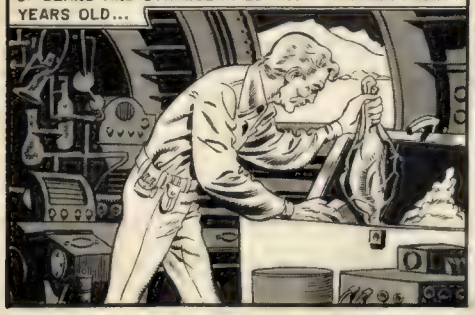
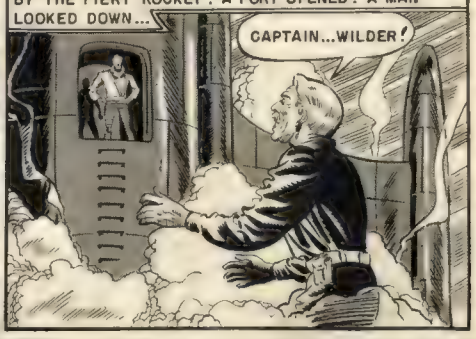
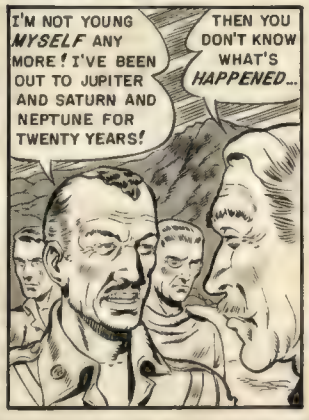
HE HURRIED ACROSS THE LAND TO THE VAST METAL STORAGE SHED! INSIDE WAS THE COLD-STORAGE UNIT AND POWER PLANT HE'D REPAIRED AND RESTORED, JUST AS HE'D REPAIRED CLOCKS, TELEPHONES, AND SPOOL-RECORDERS OVER THE YEARS IN HIS SPARE TIME! THE SHED WAS FULL OF THINGS HE'D BUILT! FROM THE DEEP FREEZE, HE FETCHED RIMED CARTONS OF BEANS AND STRAWBERRIES AND A CHICKEN TWENTY YEARS OLD...



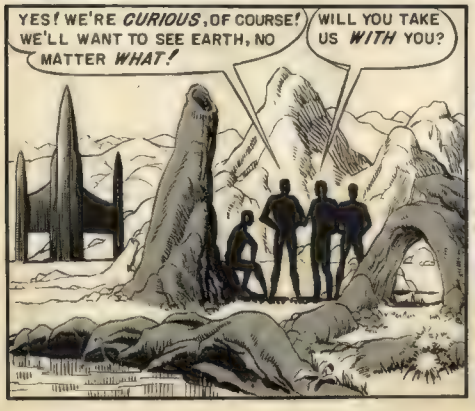
THE AIR WAS FULL OF COOKING ODORS WHEN THE ROCKET LANDED! LIKE A BOY, HATHAWAY RACED DOWN THE HILL! HE STOPPED ONCE BECAUSE OF A SUDDEN SICK PAIN IN HIS CHEST! HE SAT ON A ROCK TO REGAIN HIS BREATH, THEN RAN ALL THE REST OF THE WAY! HE STOOD IN THE HOT ATMOSPHERE GENERATED BY THE FIERY ROCKET! A PORT OPENED! A MAN LOOKED DOWN...



CAPTAIN WILDER JUMPED DOWN AND STOOD THERE LOOKING AT THE OLD MAN...


I'M NOT YOUNG MYSELF ANY MORE! I'VE BEEN OUT TO JUPITER AND SATURN AND NEPTUNE FOR TWENTY YEARS!
THEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED...

I CAN GUESS! WE'VE CIRCLED MARS TWICE! IT'S PRETTY WELL DEAD...NOT ANOTHER SOUL ALIVE! WHAT ABOUT EARTH?
YOU KNOW AS MUCH AS I DO! ARE YOU GOING BACK, SIR?



OF COURSE! YOUR WIFE! I REMEMBER HER! TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, WASN'T IT? AND THERE WERE CHILDREN!
MY SON AND TWO DAUGHTERS! THEY'RE UP AT OUR HUT! THERE'S A FINE BREAKFAST WAITING ALL OF YOU! COME!
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THEY WALKED ON UP THE HILL TO THE HUT! HATHAWAY'S WIFE APPEARED FOLLOWED BY THE TWO DAUGHTERS, TALL AND GRACIOUS, AND AN EVEN TALLER SON...

ALICE! YOU REMEMBER CAPTAIN WILDER?

OF...COURSE, CAPTAIN WILDER! MY DAUGHTERS, MARGUERITE AND SUSAN! MY SON, JOHN! YOU REMEMBER THE CAPTAIN, SURELY, CHILDREN?

HANDS WERE SHAKEN AMID LAUGHTER AND MUCH TALK! EVERYONE MOVED! FOLDING TABLES WERE HURRIED OUT WHILE HOT FOODS WERE RUSHED FORTH, AND PLATES AND FINE DAMASK NAPKINS AND GOOD SILVERWARE WERE LAID...

HOW OLD ARE YOU NOW, JOHN?

TWENTY-THREE, SIR!

CAPTAIN WILDER SHIFTED HIS SILVERWARE CLUMSILY! HIS FACE WAS SUDDENLY PALE! THE MAN NEXT TO HIM WHISPERED...

THAT CAN'T BE RIGHT, SIR! I'M FORTY-THREE MYSELF! I WAS IN SCHOOL THE SAME TIME AS YOUNG JOHN HATHAWAY, THERE... TWENTY YEARS AGO!

WHAT'S THAT, WILLIAMS?

HE SAYS HE'S ONLY TWENTY-THREE NOW! HE ONLY LOOKS TWENTY-THREE! BUT THAT'S WRONG! HE SHOULD BE FORTY-TWO, AT LEAST!

THE DAUGHTERS, TOO! I SAW THEM TWENTY YEARS AGO! THEY HAVEN'T CHANGED... NOT A WRINKLE!

WILL YOU DO ME A FAVOR, WILLIAMS? I WANT YOU TO RUN AN ERRAND! I'LL TELL YOU WHERE TO GO! IT ISN'T FAR FROM HERE! I SAW IT FROM THE ROCKET...

HERE! WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT SO SERIOUSLY? SMILE NOW! WE'RE GOING HOME!

MRS. HATHAWAY LADLED QUICK SPOONS OF SOUP INTO THEIR BOWLS! CAPTAIN WILDER WATCHED HER DRIFT AWAY, DRIFT WITH HER PINK FACE WARM, SMOOTH AS AN APPLE, UNWRINKLED AND COLORFUL! AFTER A WHILE WILLIAMS LEFT...

WHERE'S HE GOING, CAPTAIN?

CHECKING THE ROCKET, MRS. HATHAWAY! BUT AS I WAS SAYING, YOU CERTAINLY LOOK VERY WELL AND YOUNG...

CAPTAIN WILDER TALKED MECHANICALLY, NOT HEARING HIS WORDS, THINKING ONLY OF WILLIAMS RUNNING DOWN THE HILL AND CLIMBING BACK TO TELL WHAT HE FOUND...

WELL?

THE FOUR CROSSES WERE THERE, SIR! THE NAMES WERE STILL ON THEM! I WROTE THEM DOWN! 'ALICE, MARGUERITE, SUSAN, AND JOHN HATHAWAY! DIED OF UNKNOWN VIRUS! JULY, 2007!' THAT'S NINETEEN YEARS AGO!

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HATHAWAY STOOD UP...

A TOAST TO ALL OF YOU! IT'S GOOD TO BE WITH *FRIENDS* AGAIN! AND TO MY WIFE AND CHILDREN, WITHOUT WHOM I COULDN'T HAVE SURVIVED ALONE! IT IS ONLY...THROUGH...

HE DID NOT CRY OUT AS HE FELL FORWARD OVER THE TABLE AND SLIPPED TO THE GROUND! WILDER KNELT AND TOOK THE OLD MAN'S HAND! HATHAWAY'S VOICE WAS BARELY AUDIBLE...

I...I SPOILED THE BREAKFAST! SAY GOOD-BYE TO ALICE... AND THE CHILDREN...

I'LL CALL THEM!

NO! NO! *DON'T!* THEY WOULDN'T *UNDERSTAND!* I WOULDN'T *WANT* THEM TO UNDERSTAND! DON'T! I...I...

HATHAWAY!

HE WAS DEAD! WILDER AROSE, WENT TO ALICE HATHAWAY, AND LOOKED INTO HER FACE...

DO YOU KNOW WHAT HAS JUST *HAPPENED?*

SOMETHING ABOUT MY *HUSBAND!*

HE HAS JUST *PASSED AWAY!* HIS *HEART...*

I'M *SORRY!*

HOW DO YOU *FEEL?*

HE DIDN'T WANT US TO FEEL BADLY! HE TOLD US IT WOULD HAPPEN SOMEDAY, AND HE DIDN'T WANT US TO CRY!

HE DIDN'T TEACH US *HOW*, YOU KNOW! HE DIDN'T *WANT* US TO KNOW HOW TO CRY! HE SAID IT WAS THE *WORST* THING THAT COULD *HAPPEN* TO A MAN TO KNOW HOW TO BE *LONELY* AND KNOW HOW TO BE *SAD* AND THEN TO *CRY!* SO WE WEREN'T TO *KNOW* WHAT *CRYING* IS...OR BEING *SAD!*

MR. HATHAWAY DID A *FINE JOB* ON *YOU* AND *YOUR CHILDREN!*

HE WOULD HAVE LIKED TO HEAR YOU *SAY* THAT! HE WAS SO *PROUD* OF US! AFTER A WHILE, HE EVEN *FORGOT* THAT HE *MADE* US! AT THE END HE *LOVED* AND *TOOK* US AS HIS REAL WIFE AND CHILDREN! AND, IN A WAY, WE *ARE!*

YOU GAVE HIM A *GOOD DEAL* OF *COMFORT!*

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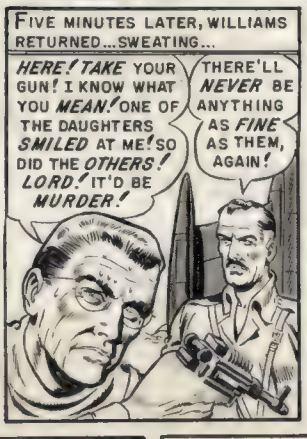
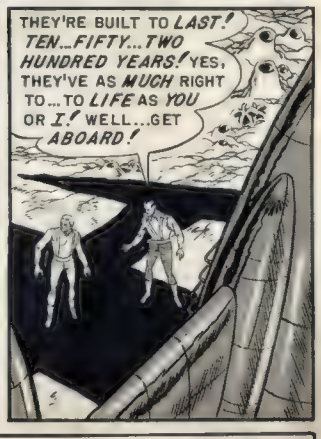
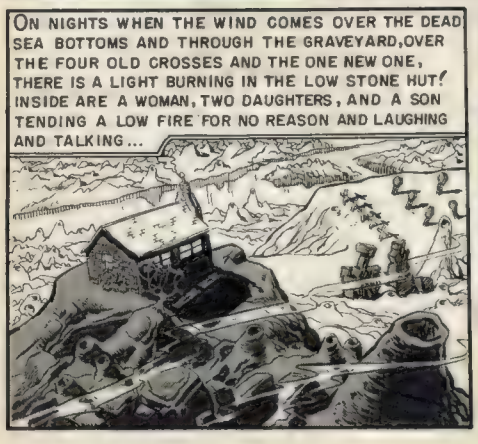
YES! FOR YEARS ON END WE SAT AND TALKED! HE LOVED TO TALK! HE LIKED THE STONE HUT AND THE OPEN FIRE! WE COULD HAVE LIVED IN A MORE MODERN HOUSE IN THE DESERTED CITY, BUT HE LIKED IT UP HERE! HE TOLD ME ALL ABOUT HIS LABORATORY AND THE THINGS HE DID IN IT! HE WOULD SIT AND LIGHT A CIGAR AND TALK TO US! THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING HE COULDN'T MAKE US DO!

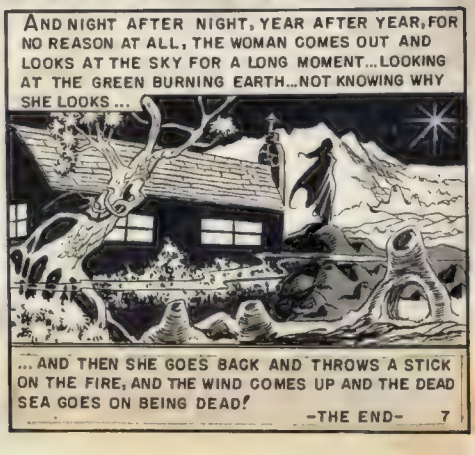
HE COULDN'T MAKE US GROW OLD! HE GOT OLDER EVERY DAY, BUT WE STAYED THE SAME! I GUESS HE DIDN'T MIND! I GUESS HE WANTED US THIS WAY!
WE'LL BURY HIM DOWN IN THE CEMETERY WHERE THE OTHER FOUR CORPSES ARE! I THINK HE WOULD LIKE THAT!

AFTER THE FUNERAL, WILLIAMS NODDED AT THE STONE HUT...
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO ABOUT *THEM*? YOU *CAN'T* LEAVE THEM HERE, LIKE *THAT*... AS THEY *ARE*!
HERE'S MY *GUN*! IF *YOU* CAN DO ANYTHING ABOUT THIS, YOU'RE A *BETTER MAN* THAN *I*!


FIVE MINUTES LATER, WILLIAMS RETURNED... SWEATING...
HERE! *TAKE* YOUR GUN! I KNOW WHAT YOU *MEAN*! ONE OF THE DAUGHTERS *SMILED* AT ME! SO DID THE *OTHERS*! *LORD*! IT'D BE *MURDER*!
THERE'LL *NEVER* BE ANYTHING AS *FINE* AS THEM, AGAIN!

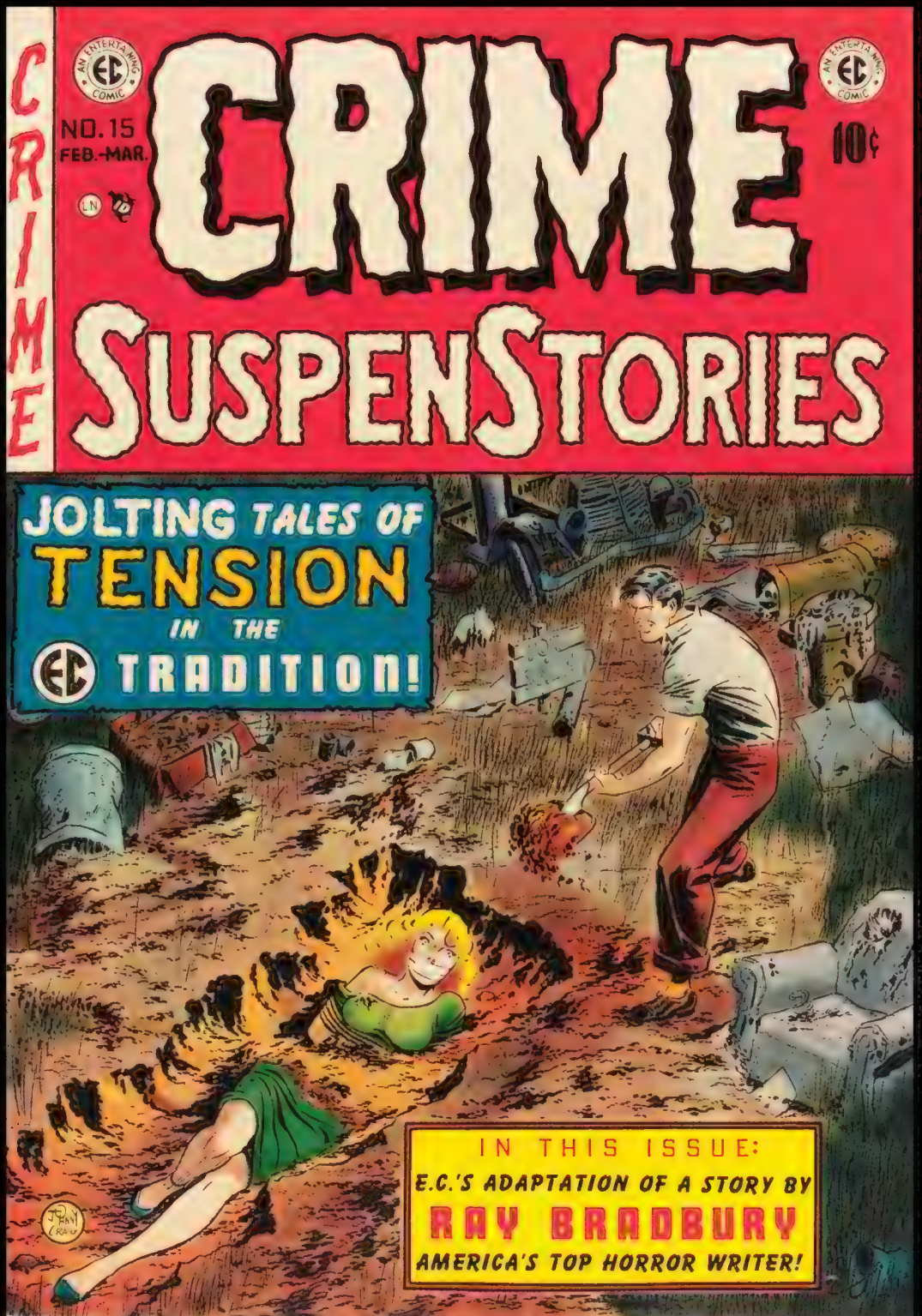

THEY'RE BUILT TO *LAST*! *TEN*... *FIFTY*... *TWO HUNDRED YEARS*! YES, THEY'VE AS *MUCH* RIGHT TO... TO *LIFE* AS *YOU* OR *I*! WELL... GET *ABOARD*!


ON NIGHTS WHEN THE WIND COMES OVER THE DEAD SEA BOTTOMS AND THROUGH THE GRAVEYARD, OVER THE FOUR OLD CROSSES AND THE ONE NEW ONE, THERE IS A LIGHT BURNING IN THE LOW STONE HUT! INSIDE ARE A WOMAN, TWO DAUGHTERS, AND A SON TENDING A LOW FIRE FOR NO REASON AND LAUGHING AND TALKING...

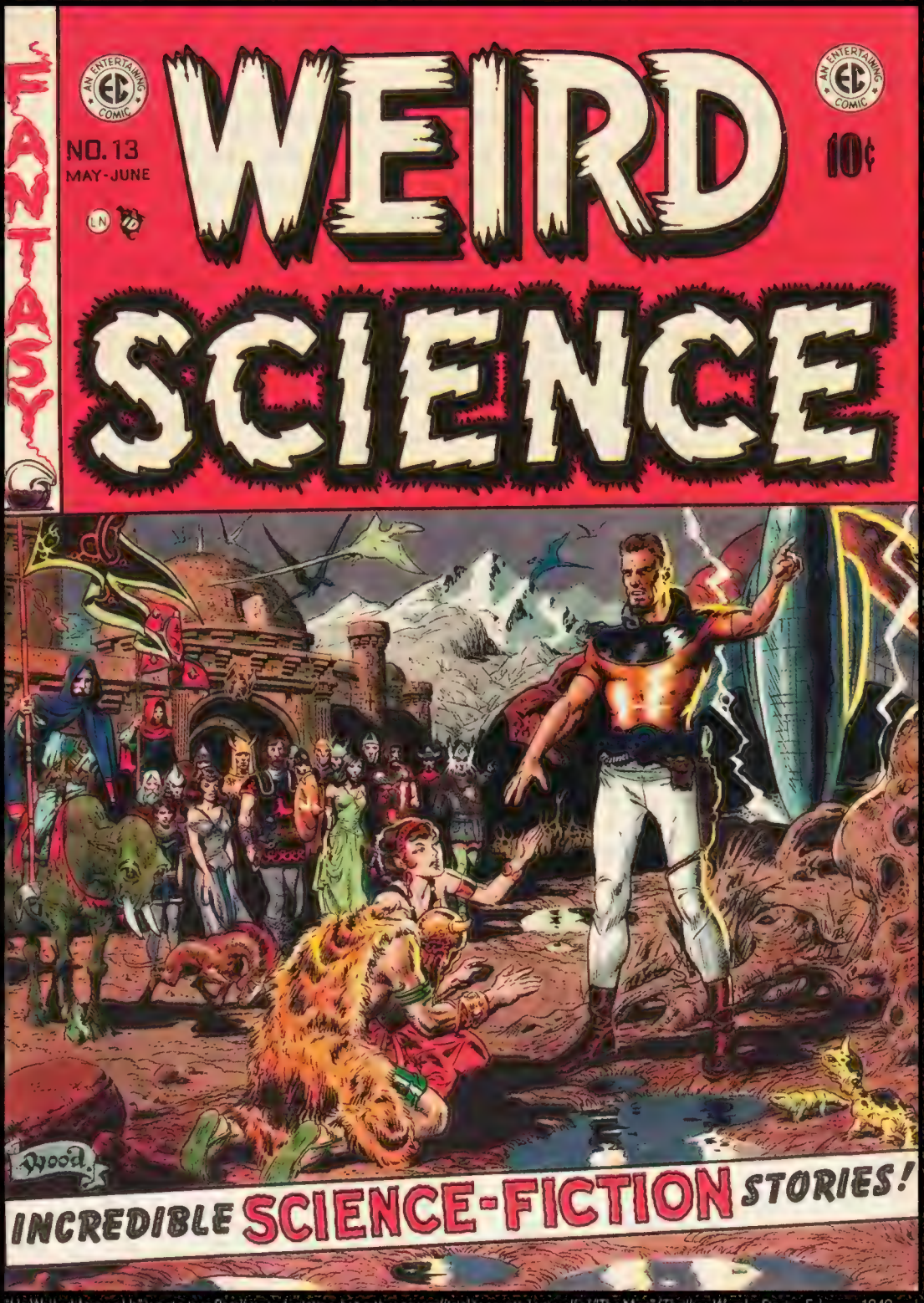

AND NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, YEAR AFTER YEAR, FOR NO REASON AT ALL, THE WOMAN COMES OUT AND LOOKS AT THE SKY FOR A LONG MOMENT... LOOKING AT THE GREEN BURNING EARTH... NOT KNOWING WHY SHE LOOKS...
... AND THEN SHE GOES BACK AND THROWS A STICK ON THE FIRE, AND THE WIND COMES UP AND THE DEAD SEA GOES ON BEING DEAD!
-THE END- 7

THE COVERS

THE ORIGINAL EC COMICS AND BALLANTINE
PAPERBACKS FEATURING RAY BRADBURY'S STORIES

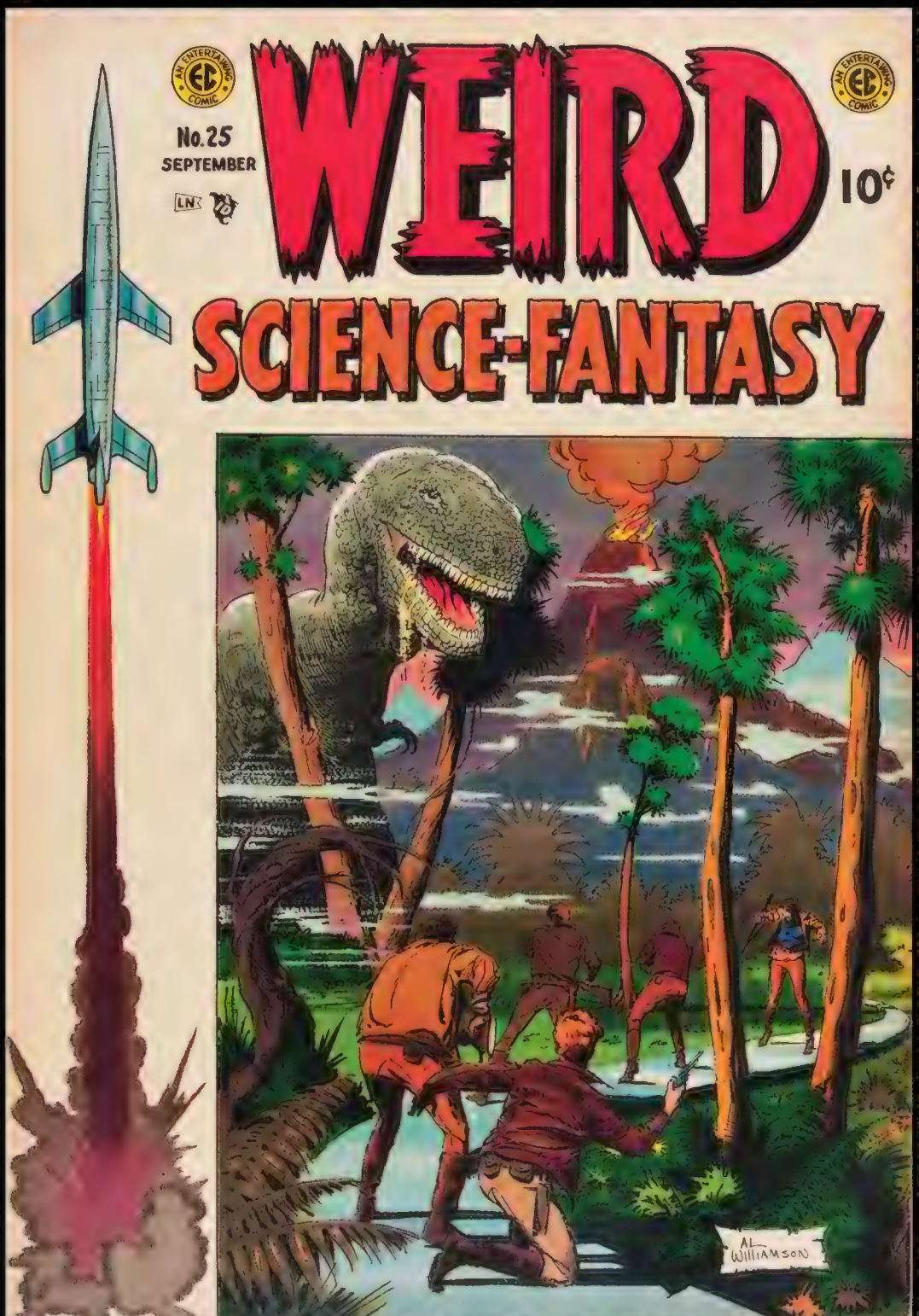


"The Screaming Woman!" (*Today*, May 27, 1951) was the first official Bradbury adaptation to be cover-featured on an EC comic. This is the only EC cover to feature a Bradbury story and include his name on the cover. *Crime SuspenStories* #15, February-March 1953. Cover art by Johnny Craig. The story inside was drawn by Jack Kamen

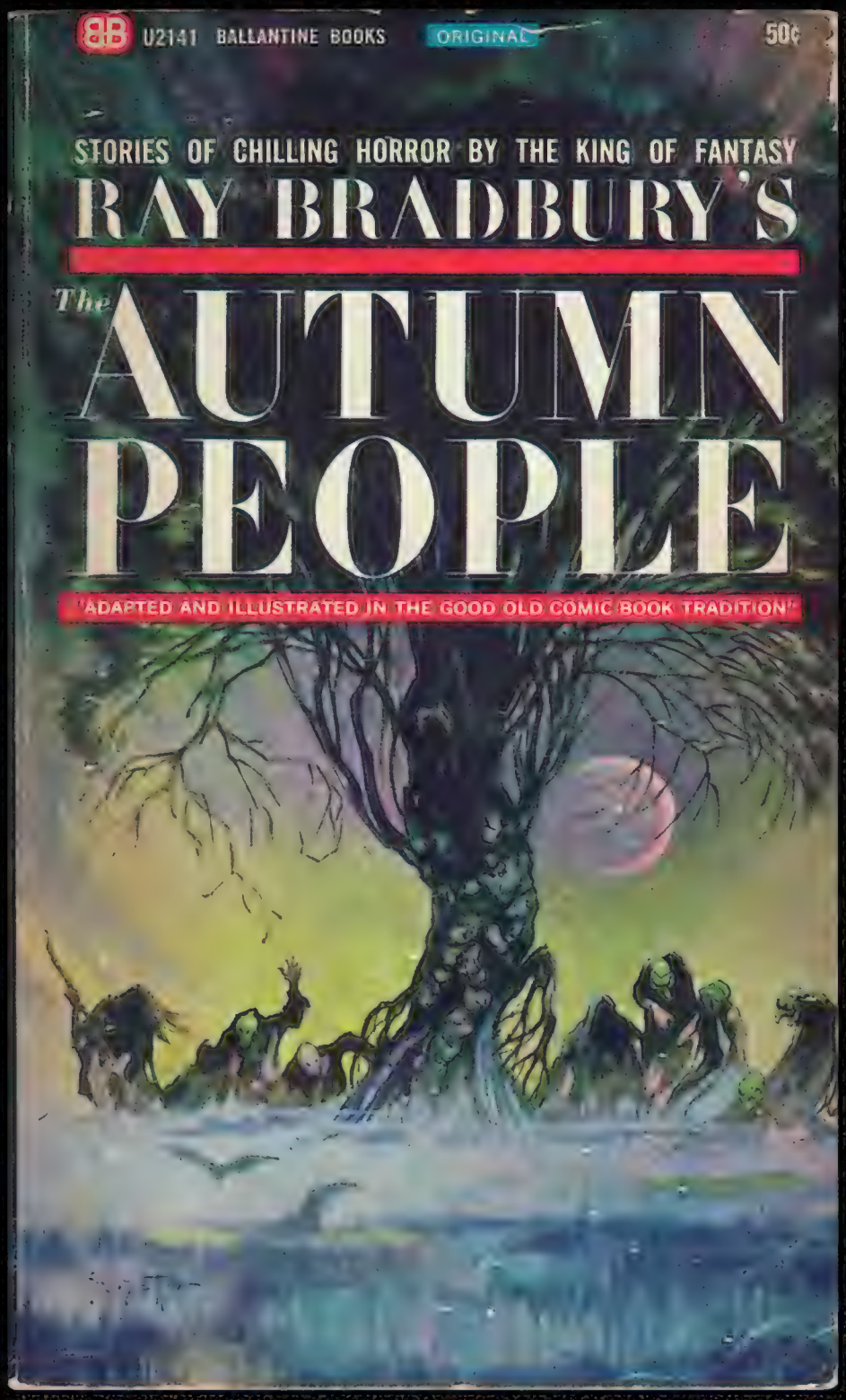


"He Walked Among Us" is not a true Bradbury adaptation, but rather an unofficial tangential spin-off of "The Man" (*Thrilling Wonder Stories*, February 1949 and *The Illustrated Man*, 1951). *Weird Science* #13, May-June 1952. Cover and story art by Wallace Wood.

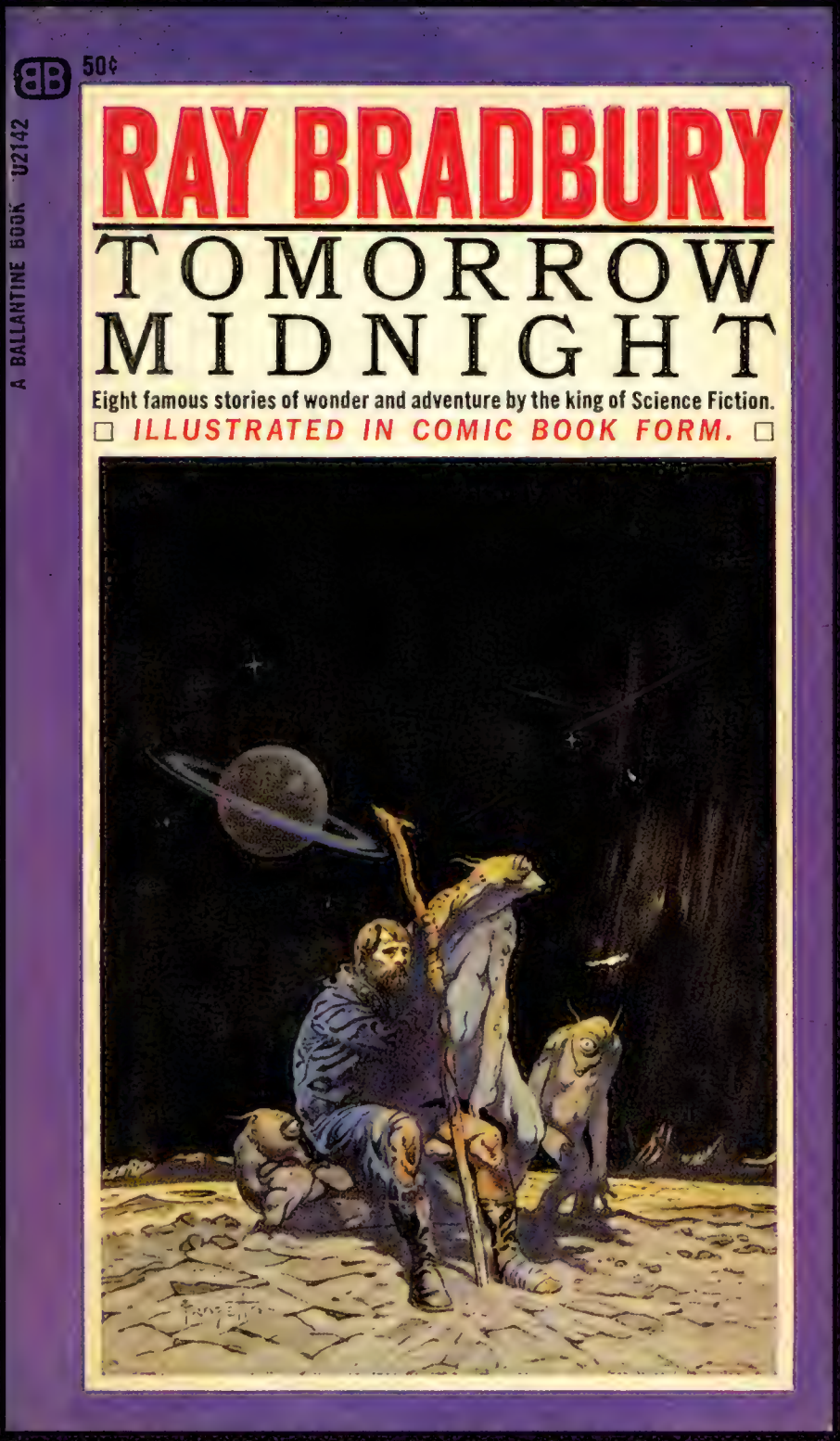
"I, Rocket," (*Amazing Stories*, May 1944) was the first official Bradbury science fiction adaptation to be featured on an EC cover. Al Feldstein later recreated this scene as a painting (p. 296). Ironically, by this time, Bradbury had requested that his name not appear on EC covers. (EC had bannered his name on the covers of the issues that adapted his stories, even when a different story was cover-featured.) *Weird Fantasy* #20, July-August 1953. Cover art by Al Feldstein. The story inside was drawn by Al Williamson, Frank Frazetta, and Roy Krenkel.



"A Sound of Thunder" (*Collier's*, June 28, 1952 and *The Golden Apples of the Sun*, 1953), one of Bradbury's most famous stories, was EC's last official adaptation. *Weird Science-Fantasy* #25, September 1954. Cover art by Al Williamson. The story inside was drawn by Al Williamson, Angelo Torres, and Roy Krenkel.


BB U2141 BALLANTINE BOOKS ORIGINAL 50¢
STORIES OF CHILLING HORROR BY THE KING OF FANTASY
RAY BRADBURY'S
The AUTUMN PEOPLE
"ADAPTED AND ILLUSTRATED IN THE GOOD OLD COMIC BOOK TRADITION"

The *Autumn People* reprinted eight EC adaptations of Bradbury's horror and crime stories in a standard-size paperback book. (Ballantine Books, October 1965.) Cover painting by Frank Frazetta.


50¢
A BALLANTINE BOOK U2142
RAY BRADBURY
TOMORROW MIDNIGHT
Eight famous stories of wonder and adventure by the king of Science Fiction.
ILLUSTRATED IN COMIC BOOK FORM.

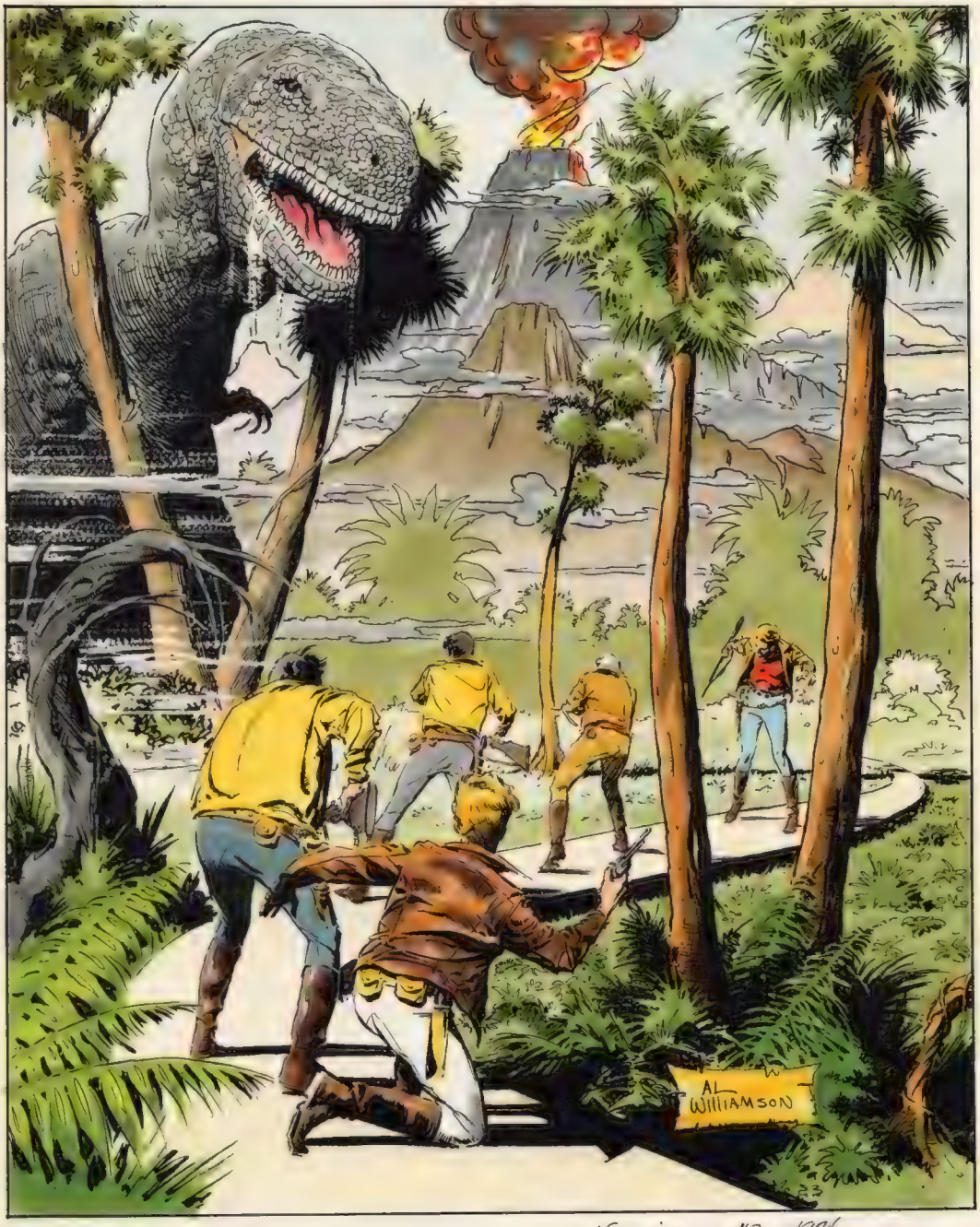
Tomorrow Midnight reprinted eight EC adaptations of Bradbury's science fiction stories in a standard-size paperback book. (Ballantine Books, 1966.) Cover painting by Frank Frazetta.

THE COVER ART

A GALLERY OF COVER ART
PAINTINGS AND RECREATIONS

The Autumn People, 1965. Oil on board, 19.5 x 14.75 inches. Frank Frazetta (1928–2010). Frank Frazetta's painting for the cover of *The Autumn People*.

Stranded, 1965. Oil on board, 19.5 x 14.75 inches. Frank Frazetta (1928–2010). Frank Frazetta's painting for the cover of *Tomorrow Midnight*.



In 1974, Marie Severin hand-colored a few prints of Al Williamson's cover art for *Weird Science-Fantasy* #25. This is the second one she did. Art: Al Williamson, 1954. Colors: Marie Severin, 1974. Collection of Grant Geissman.

Weird Science Fantasy 20 Revisited, completed March 2002, Livingston, Montana. Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 24 inches. Al Feldstein (1925–2014). Al Feldstein's painting recreating the cover of *Weird Science* #20, July-August 1953. Collection of Grant Geissman.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

RAY DOUGLAS BRADBURY (1920–2012, b. Waukegan, Illinois), one of the most well-loved authors of the 20th century, was first published in 1938. His short-story collections *The Martian Chronicles* (1950) and *The Illustrated Man* (1951) suggested a major talent. His novel *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) confirmed it. He went on to write 26 more novels and more than 500 short stories and film and television scripts.

EC Comics began adapting Bradbury's stories in 1951 — without permission. Bradbury, a comics fan, caught on, but instead of unleashing a lawyer, he wrote Bill Gaines, suggesting it had been an "oversight," adding, "You have not as yet sent on the check for $50.00 ...". Gaines promptly paid, and that led to frequent, authorized adaptations of Bradbury's work.

Among many other honors, Bradbury was awarded the National Medal of Arts by President George W. Bush. Not only was he was given a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, but a real celestial object — 9766 Bradbury, a main-belt asteroid — was named for him.

Bradbury married in 1947 and had four daughters. His wife, Marguerite, died in 2003. When Bradbury died in June 2012, he was lauded by librarians, filmmakers, fellow authors, and President Barack Obama.

In August 2012, NASA named the site where the rover Curiosity landed on the surface of Mars "Bradbury Landing."

JOHNNY CRAIG (1926–2001, b. Pleasantville, New York) was raised in New York City, where he studied at the Art Students League. In 1940, Craig began working as an assistant to Harry Lampert at Maxwell "Charlie" Gaines's All-American Comics. Craig served in the Army 1943–1945 then returned to Gaines's employ at Gaines's new company, EC Comics. Craig started out doing lettering and corrections but soon found great success drawing the crime and horror stories that Gaines's son, Bill, began publishing when he took over EC after his father's death.

Craig worked on many of EC's most popular titles, including *Tales From the Crypt*, *The Haunt of Fear*, *Crime SuspenStories*, and *The Vault of Horror*. He also designed the Vault-Keeper, the story host for the latter title. Craig is best known for his clean and meticulously crafted artwork. He produced some of EC's most memorable — and controversial — covers.

After EC's collapse, Craig moved to advertising. He returned to comics in the 1960s, drawing superhero comics for Marvel. In the 1970s he contributed to Warren Publishing's horror comics line. He retired from comics in the 1980s but made EC-related oil paintings and artwork until his death in 2001. Craig was inducted into the Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame in 2005.

REED CRANDALL (1917–1982, b. Winslow, Indiana) graduated from the Cleveland School of Art in Ohio in 1939. Crandall briefly worked at a children's book publisher in New York but soon found his way to the Eisner and Iger Studio. Much of his early work appeared in Quality Comics publications such as *Hit*, *Smash*, and *Military Comics*. Crandall, who served briefly in the Army Air Force during World War II, became one of the primary artists for *Blackhawk*, a team of swashbuckling aviators that starred in *Military Comics* (renamed *Modern Comics* after the war) and in its own title.

Crandall started at EC in 1953, drawing for titles in different genres, including *The Haunt of Fear*, *Crime SuspenStories*, *Two-Fisted Tales*, *Piracy*, and *Weird Fantasy*. After the mid-1950s backlash against comics, he freelanced for Atlas (later Marvel) Comics and Gilberton's *Classics Illustrated*. He worked on the Catholic-oriented comic book *Treasure Chest* from 1960–1972, also doing stories for Warren Publishing's *Creepy*, *Eerie*, and *Blazing Combat*. He drew the *Buster Brown* comics for Buster Brown shoe stores for many years, and during the 1960s he drew *Flash Gordon* for King Comics.

In the late 1960s, Crandall left New York for Wichita, Kansas, to care for his mother. He ceased drawing after he suffered a stroke in 1974. He died in 1982 of a heart attack. Crandall was inducted into the Jack Kirby Hall of Fame in 1998 and into the Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame in 2009.

JOHN BURTON "JACK" DAVIS, JR. (1924–2016, b. Atlanta, Georgia), a lanky (6-foot-3-inch) young Southerner, was on the verge of returning home after a mostly unsuccessful search for work as an artist in New York City when he came upon the address of EC Comics while leafing through comics at a newsstand. Reluctant to part with even one more dime, he furtively copied it down while the newsdealer wasn't looking. He trundled his samples downtown to their offices without knowing anything about what they published.

Editor Al Feldstein assigned him a story on the spot, and Davis, shocked by his turn of good fortune after so many rejections, returned the next day with penciled pages. Pleased with Davis's speed and professionalism, Feldstein immediately gave him another assignment.

Davis's cartoony, brush-heavy style was a perfect match for Feldstein's gruesome but tongue-in-cheek horror tales, and readers heartily approved of the latest addition to the EC family. Editor Harvey Kurtzman also tapped Davis to be a regular contributor to *Two-Fisted Tales* and *Frontline Combat*. Ultimately, Davis became one of EC's most popular and prolific artists, contributing more than 120 stories and dozens of covers to their horror, suspense, war, science fiction, adventure, and humor titles.

Kurtzman also tapped him for *Mad*, which morphed from a comic book to a magazine, and when Kurtzman left EC, Davis went along and contributed to Kurtzman's subsequent publishing projects *Trump*, *Humbug*, and *Help!* and even had a hand in Kurtzman and Will Elder's *Little Annie Fanny* comic strip in *Playboy*. Davis also sold his own gag cartoons directly to *Playboy*. He returned to Feldstein's *Mad* in 1965, staying on through 1997 as one of the magazine's most prolific and popular artists.

Meanwhile, his trademark frenetic style became ubiquitous in American popular media and burned it-

Wallace Wood drew most of the EC Comics crew in this panel from "EC Confidential!" (*Weird Science* #21, September-October 1953). L-to-R: Marie Severin (EC colorist and sister of John Severin), Jack Kamen, Joe Orlando, Johnny Craig, EC business manager Frank Lee (as "Mr. Fables," in front), Harvey Kurtzman (peering over Craig's shoulder), Graham Ingels, Al Feldstein, Bill Gaines, Wallace Wood, Al Williamson, Jack Davis (in the back), Gloria Orlando (married Joe Orlando in 1951, standing in front of Davis), Will Elder, Nancy Siegel (married Bill Gaines in 1955), John Severin (in the back), and George Evans. Missing from this EC line-up are Ray Bradbury, Reed Crandall, Frank Frazetta, Roy G. Krenkel, Bernard Krigstein, Angelo Torres, and Carl Wessler

self into the American unconscious. His bright-eyed, big-toothed, loose-limbed caricatures of TV and movie stars appeared regularly on the covers of *TV Guide* and posters for big-budget movies. He drew magazine illustrations, book covers, bubblegum cards, print ads, animated TV commercials, product packages, and even a U.S. postage stamp. He drew covers and cartoons for other national magazines including *Time*, *Esquire*, *Ebony*, and *Ladies' Home Journal*. At the peak of his career in the 1980s, Davis was earning a seven-figure income from his work and might well have been the country's most highly-paid commercial illustrator.

Among other honors, Jack Davis was awarded the National Cartoonists Society's Advertising Award in 1980, the Society's Milton Caniff Lifetime Achievement Award in 1996, and its Reuben Award in 2000. In June 2002, The Society of Illustrators staged a retrospective of Davis's work in New York. He was inducted into that Society's Illustrators Hall of Fame in 2005 and the Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame in 2003. Fantagraphics Books published *Jack Davis: Drawing American Pop Culture*, a career retrospective, in 2011, and has, to date, published three collections of his work in its *Fantagraphics EC Artists' Library* series.

WILLIAM "WILL"/"BILL" ELDER (1921–2008, b. Bronx, New York) was a member of the first graduating class of the High School of Music & Art, along with classmates Harvey Kurtzman and Al Jaffee. In school, he earned a well-deserved reputation as a prankster. After serving in World War II, he segued into comics and commercial illustration via the Charles William Harvey studio.

He began his association with John Severin by inking Severin's pencils for *Prize Comics Western* and the EC war titles written and edited by Kurtzman. Kurtzman realized the combination of Severin's obsession for accuracy and Elder's fanatic attention to detail was exactly what he needed for his stories. When Kurtzman started *Mad* in 1952, he immediately recruited Elder to be one of its four star artists. This gave Elder his first opportunity to do what he did best — parody and humor. Elder's anarchic wit set the tone for *Mad*, and he appeared in every issue edited by Kurtzman.

When Kurtzman left *Mad* in 1956, Elder went with him to the short-lived *Trump*, then became a partner with Kurtzman, Jaffee, Jack Davis, Arnold Roth, and Harry Chester in the ill-fated *Humbug*, drew the Kurtzman-scripted *Goodman Beaver* for *Help!*, and finally settled in with Kurtzman on *Little Annie Fanny*, which ran in *Playboy* for nearly three decades. Will Elder was inducted into the Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame in 2003.

GEORGE EVANS (1920–2001, b. Harwood, Pennsylvania) studied illustration via a correspondence school and learned about airplanes while serving in the U.S. Army during World War II. Already established as a pulp magazine artist, he began working for comic book publishers such as Fiction House, Better Publications, and Fawcett in the booming comics market that sprang to life in the late 1940s.

Although best known for his aviation work in *Aces High*, Evans was a reliable workhorse for EC. He contributed to *Haunt of Fear*, *Tales From the Crypt*, and *Frontline Combat*, among other titles. His cover to *Crime Suspenstories* #23 was held up as an example of potent, lurid comics-making during 1954's infamous Senate subcommittee hearings on juvenile delinquency.

Evans drew a feature for *Boys' Life* magazine following the EC era and ghosted for George Wunder on *Terry and the Pirates*. In the 1960s, he drew for Gilberton, Warren, and Gold Key. His work appeared in *National Lampoon* and Marvel Comics in the 1970s.

Evans drew the strip *Secret Agent Corrigan* from 1980 to 1996. He also enjoyed a second career as a painter of aviation scenes for everything from calendars to book covers. Relocating to central Pennsylvania, Evans worked intermittently from the mid-1990s until his death in 2001.

ALBERT B. FELDSTEIN (1925–2014. b. Brooklyn, New York) began working in comics at 15 at the Eisner and Iger Studio. He graduated from the High School of Music & Art, then attended classes at Brooklyn College and the Art Students League before entering the Air Corps during World War II. While in the Special Forces, he designed posters, painted murals, and drew a comic strip called *Baffy* for the base newspaper in Blytheville, Arkansas. After the war, he worked for Iger again before moving on to Fox Feature Syndicate.

Feldstein began his career at EC in 1947. Though initially hired as an artist, he is best known for his writing. He also served as editor for most of EC's comic book titles. With Bill Gaines, he created EC's famous line of horror and science fiction comics, including *Tales From the Crypt* and *Weird Science*. He became editor of *Mad* in 1956, where he remained until 1984.

After moving to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, he fulfilled his life-long dream of becoming a fine artist. He later moved to Livingston, Montana, with his wife, Michelle. In 1999, he received an honorary Doctorate of the Arts degree from Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Montana.

Feldstein was inducted into the Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame in 2003. In 2011, he received the Bram Stoker Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Horror Writers Association.

FRANK FRAZETTA (1928–2010, b. Frank Frazzetta, Brooklyn, New York) began attending the Brooklyn Academy of Fine Arts at age 8. In 1944, at 15, he joined Bernard Baily's studio, and in two short years, he was handling his own assignments.

His first comic book work was inking the eight-page story "Snowman," a character he'd created as a child, penciled by John Giunta (*Tally-Ho Comics*, December 1944.) Future EC star artist Graham Ingels gave him work at Standard Comics in 1947. Prolific and adaptable, his comic book work spanned humor, funny animals, Westerns, historical drama, romance, horror, crime, fantasy, and science fiction for such companies as Prize, Magazine Enterprises (ME) (including *Thun'da* and *White Indian*), DC (including *Shining Knight*), Toby, Lev Gleason, Eastern Color (*Famous Funnies*), and Avon. At EC, much of his work was done in collaboration with friends from the "Fleagle Gang," Al Williamson and Roy Krenkel.

He did a series of eight Buck Rogers covers for *Famous Funnies* from 1953 to 1955 that cemented his fame. A ninth was rejected but it then became the basis for his famous 1955 cover for EC's *Weird Science-Fantasy* #29.

Frazetta also worked in comic strips, drawing *Johnny Comet* (with help from Wallace Wood, Al Williamson, and Jack Hearne) and assisting Al Capp on *Li'l Abner* and Dan Barry on *Flash Gordon*. His many paintings for the covers of *Creepy*, *Eerie*, *Blazing Combat*, and *Vampirella* drew attention to Warren Publishing's line of EC-inspired magazine-sized comics in the 1960s and 1970s.

He excited many with his paintings for science fiction and fantasy paperback covers in the 1960s, most notably for Robert E. Howard's Conan books and Edgar Rice Burroughs's adventure novel series (*Tarzan*, *John Carter of Mars*, *Carson of Venus*, and *Pellucidar*). He also painted covers for LP record albums (for bands as strangely diverse as Herman's Hermits and The Dead Elvi) and magazines such as *National Lampoon* and *Heavy Metal*. His 1964 shampoo ad parody featuring a caricature of Ringo Starr for *Mad* magazine led to a new career painting posters for Hollywood motion pictures (*What's New Pussycat?*, *The Night They Raided Minsky's*, *The Gauntlet*).

Frazetta was heavily involved in the production of *Fire and Ice*, a 1983 feature film that animated his work, from producer Ralph Bakshi.

Frazetta was not only artistic, but athletic, too. His lithe, muscular build was not unlike that of many of the characters he drew. In his 20s, he turned down an offer to become a professional baseball player for the New York Giants farm team. He kept fit throughout his life and when, in his 70s, he suffered a series of strokes that impaired his ability to paint with his right hand, he relearned painting with his left.

Frazetta won the Hugo Award for Best Professional Artist in 1966. He was the recipient of three Chesley Awards (1988, 1995, 1997) from the Association of Science Fiction and Fantasy Artists, and he won the Spectrum Grand Master of Fantastic Art Award in 1995.

He was inducted into the Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame in 1995 and the Jack Kirby Hall of Fame in 1999.

WILLIAM MAXWELL GAINES (1922–1992, b. New York City) was the son of M.C. Gaines, the founder of EC Comics. Bill Gaines was studying chemistry at New York University when his father died in 1947, leaving him to run the family business. EC's comics were selling poorly, so Bill moved to re-invigorate the company by breaking from the educational, humor, kiddy, Western, and romance titles that EC was then known for.

He kept Johnny Craig, Al Feldstein, Graham Ingels, and Wallace Wood, and brought in Reed Crandall, Jack

Davis, Will Elder, George Evans, Jack Kamen, Bernard Krigstein, Harvey Kurtzman, Joe Orlando, John Severin, Marie Severin, and Al Williamson, among others.

Under Bill Gaines, EC became known for its popular horror, crime, war, and science fiction comics, such as *Tales From the Crypt*, *Crime SuspenStories*, *Two-Fisted Tales*, and *Weird Science* — and, of course, *Mad*, which created its own category.

In 1954, Gaines badly mishandled his appearance before a Senate subcommittee investigating the alleged link between juvenile delinquency and comic books. Shortly thereafter, EC fell victim to the Comics Code Authority, an organization hastily put together by a group of comic book publishers to head off Congressional pressure.

By 1956, EC had dropped all of its titles except *Mad*. Gaines remained publisher of *Mad* until his death in 1992. He was inducted into the Will Eisner Hall of Fame in 1993 and the Jack Kirby Hall of Fame in 1997.

GRAHAM INGELS (1915–1991, b. Cincinnati, Ohio), was the son of Don Ingels, a commercial artist who died when Graham was only 14. Young Graham honed his craft in theater before becoming a fixture at the Fiction House line of pulps and comics in the early 1940s. His earliest known comics work is a Sea Devil story in *Rangers Comics* #9, February 1943. He freelanced for Magazine Enterprises, Eastern Color, and DS Publishing. He drew for and became art director at Standard/Better, where he gave work to Frank Frazetta and George Evans, among others.

In 1948 he began working for EC Comics, drawing Western, romance, and crime stories. But it was with the advent of EC's horror titles that Ingels achieved comic book immortality.

"Ghastly" Graham Ingels's detailed work perfectly evoked the proper mood for the kind of wickedly macabre stories EC excelled at, and it made him a fan favorite. Ingels drew the lead feature for every issue of *Haunt of Fear* starting with #4, but his work, "hosted" by his signature character, the Old Witch, appeared regularly in all three EC horror titles and in *Crime SuspenStories*.

Ingels stayed with EC to the end, through the ill-fated picto-fiction experiment. His last EC stories appeared in *Crime Illustrated*, *Terror Illustrated*, and *Shock Illustrated*. Following that, he drew one issue of *Classics Illustrated*, an adaptation of the 1865 Erckmann-Chatrian novel, *Waterloo*. His final comics story was the seven-page "Pony Soldiers" for a *Classics Illustrated Special* about the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

When the comics industry turned away from horror, Ingels, without a steady income and a home for his art, was lost. He painted a mural at the United Nations building and became an instructor for the Famous Artists School. But a feeling of being personally betrayed by the comics industry gnawed at him.

Ingels had always had a problem with alcohol, and now it grew worse. One day in 1962, he abruptly abandoned his wife and children and vanished to South Florida. There, he started over, painting and teaching art out of his new home, having turned his back on his old life and rejecting anything to do with his comics career. Decades later, he was able to reconcile with his daughter, but not with his son.

In 1989, Ingels returned briefly to the comics landscape when he created a series of oil paintings featuring the Old Witch.

JACK KAMEN (1920–2008, b. Brooklyn, New York) drew 160 stories for EC, more than anyone else. His gift for drawing beautiful women (usually with icy hearts and murderous tendencies) was employed to maximum effect in EC's horror and shock titles, for which he is best known.

Kamen's father died when Jack was 14, prompting him to go to work to help support the family. He attended The Art Students League of New York and broke into comics at the Harry "A" Chesler shop. He freelanced for Harvey and Fawcett, then joined the S.M. Iger shop. Drafted into the Army in 1942, he saw combat in New Guinea and The Philippines.

After the war, he returned to Iger where he drew *Jo-Jo Congo King* and *Rulah, Jungle Goddess*. He joined EC in 1950, and his work appeared regularly in all three horror titles, both science fiction titles, and in every issue of *Shock SuspenStories*. He drew every cover and every story for all four issues of *Psychoanalysis*. Kamen came up with the idea for the "picto-fiction" format and single-handedly produced the first picto-fiction magazine, *Shock Illustrated* #1 (September-October 1955). When EC collapsed, Kamen moved into advertising illustration.

His only other comics-related work was the poster for the 1982 EC-inspired film *Creepshow*. In 2000, Kamen was honored with an Inkpot Award at Comic-Con International: San Diego.

Jack Kamen is the father of Dean Kamen, the world-famous inventor of the Segway PT ("personal transporter"), the first portable kidney dialysis machine, and the holder of more than 440 patents.

ROY GERARD KRENKEL (1918–1983, b. Bronx, New York), a graduate of the Cartoonists and Illustrators School where he studied under Burne Hogarth, specialized in fantasy and historical drawings and paintings for books, magazines, and comic books.

Krenkel oftentimes collaborated with his pals, the "Fleagle Gang," on various assignments for EC Comics. He drew only one solo story for EC, "Time to Leave," which showcased a beautiful futuristic city.

He also contributed solo works to science fiction magazines, and when Ace paperbacks began a series of revivals of the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs in the 1960s, Krenkel was one of the premiere cover painters for the likes of *Tarzan, Carson of Venus*, and *John Carter of Mars*. He later also did paintings and illustrations for Robert E. Howard's *Conan the Barbarian*.

Said Danton Burroughs, grandson of Edgar Rice Burroughs, "Roy Krenkel was a key factor in the 1960s revival of my grandfather's writings. Krenkel's illustrations forever secured his position as one of the all-time great Edgar Rice Burroughs illustrators."

Krenkel won the Hugo Award for Best Professional Artist in 1963.

BERNARD "BERNIE" KRIGSTEIN (1919–1990, b. Brooklyn, New York) produced more than 200 stories during his comics career (1943–1962). His 44 stories for EC Comics, especially "Master Race," "The Flying Machine," and "Pipe-Dream," are especially highly regarded by aficionados of sequential storytelling.

Krigstein graduated *cum laude* from Brooklyn College in 1940. He married Natalie Horovitz on September 8, 1940, and they moved into a small apartment on Manhattan's Lower East Side. The Krigsteins' first child, Paul, was born in 1946 but died the following year. They adopted a baby daughter, Cora, in 1949.

In late 1942, despite his low opinion of comic books, he began work at Bernard Baily's West 44th Street studio. ("I finally decided I would try comics and make a little bit of money to leave with my wife before I went into the army.") He received his draft notice in March 1943 and reported for duty in May.

Krigstein was in Belgium for the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944, and, like fellow cartoonists Will Elder and Jack Kirby, he saw combat there. At one point, when the battle shifted, he found himself behind enemy lines, but he managed to escape through a forest back to his unit.

He returned to New York and the Baily shop in October 1945 and worked there for eight months until he had a falling-out with Baily. He moved on to Lloyd Jacquet's Funnies, Inc., where he drew Westerns for Novelty and Fawcett. He began freelancing in 1948, working at various times for National (DC) Comics, Simon and Kirby (*Justice Traps the Guilty*), Holyoke/Orbit Publications (owned by Rae Herman, the industry's only female publisher), Hillman Periodicals, and Atlas (Marvel) Comics. His attempt to organize a comics artists' union in 1951 went nowhere, but it did get him blackballed at DC.

During this time, his view of the potential of comics changed completely: "I found that comics was *drawing*, and it became the only serious field for me at that time ... I became no longer embarrassed about the so-called limitations of working in black and white and so forth; I shed all criticism of the form as I worked in it."

When Krigstein began working at EC, most of his assignments came from Al Feldstein. His second EC job, "The Flying Machine," was a bona fide comics classic, a rare instance where the artist's style and the script were in perfect harmony. Original author Ray Bradbury thought so, too. In a letter dated July 18, 1953, Bradbury wrote: "'The Flying Machine' is the finest single piece of art-drawing I've seen in years. Beautiful work; I was so touched and pleased by the concern for detail." The admiration between artist and author was mutual. In 1962, Krigstein contacted Ballantine Books about doing a full-length graphic novel adaptation of Bradbury's visionary classic *Fahrenheit 451*, but publisher Ian Ballantine declined.

Krigstein kept on innovating, expanding the frontiers of comic book storytelling. His most famous, and some say his best, story was "Master Race." Written by

Feldstein as a six-page story, Krigstein liked its Holocaust-themed script so much that he wanted to expand it to 12 pages. Gaines said no, but they compromised on eight pages. By then, it was too late to run in *Crime SuspenStories*, where it had originally been scheduled, so Gaines and Feldstein sat on it for a year and finally used it as the lead story in the first issue of *Impact* (March-April 1955). Unfortunately, few comics fans saw Krigstein's master work when it came out, since the first issue of *Impact* was published without the Comics Code Authority seal, and many retailers refused to sell it.

After EC, Krigstein continued drawing comics for Atlas until 1957 when he left the field to concentrate on fine art and illustration, producing many book covers, record jackets, and book and magazine illustrations. He did one final comic book story in 1962, for Dell's *87th Precinct* TV show tie-in, but he felt the script was so awful that he left the comics business for good.

In 1962, Krigstein began teaching at the High School of Art and Design, a position he held for the next 20 years. In that time, his fine art was exhibited in many shows, which garnered him a slew of awards. Krigstein appeared at only one comic book convention, Newcon, in Boston, in 1978.

Krigstein had seen the vast potential of the comics medium, and he labored mightily to transform it. A testament to his singular vision is the fact that his best stories remain among the most innovative and cinematic comic book narratives nearly 70 years after he created them. Most of his EC work was collected in *Master Race And Other Stories* from Fantagraphics Books in 2018. Fantagraphics also released two collections of his (mostly) non-EC work, *B. Krigstein Comics* (2004) and *Messages in a Bottle* (2013).

Bernard Krigstein continued to paint and draw until the end of his life. He was posthumously inducted into the Jack Kirby Hall of Fame in 1992 and into the Will Eisner Hall of Fame in 2003.

JOE ORLANDO (1927–1998, b. Bari, Italy) quit the comics business almost before he got started.

Orlando had begun working with Wallace Wood, who was already producing artwork with Harry Harrison (the future science fiction author) for EC, so Orlando's first work with Wood was for other accounts. One of those accounts was publisher Victor Fox, whose Fox Feature Syndicate rates were among the lowest in the industry.

Even so, when Fox filed for bankruptcy in 1950, he owed Orlando and Wood $6,000. Discouraged, Orlando quit and took a job in a handbag factory, reasoning that at least he'd have a steady paycheck.

Eventually, though, Wood wore him down, and Orlando returned to help out his friend a few hours a week, earning more than his paltry salary at the handbag factory. When Orlando finally showed his samples to Al Feldstein, the EC editor hired him on the spot, proclaiming, "Terrific, we have another Wally Wood!"

Orlando produced many classic tales for EC's science fiction titles, including adaptations of Ray Bradbury's "The Lake," "The Long Years," and "Outcast of the Stars," and three of Otto Binder's famous "Adam Link" robot stories (*Judgment Day And Other Stories*, Fantagraphics Books, 2014). (Orlando would revisit Adam Link in the 1960s for Warren's *Creepy*, doing those stories in evocative gray washes.) In all, he produced 94 stories and four covers during his time at EC.

Ironically, Orlando's last appearance in an EC color comic was also the last story in the last comic book EC put out. "Judgment Day" had been published earlier, but when the new Comics Code Authority rejected a story by Angelo Torres for the final issue of *Incredible Science Fiction*, publisher Bill Gaines and editor Al Feldstein decided to substitute the classic Orlando-drawn parable about racism.

Gaines had already decided he would publish no more color comic books, but when he submitted "Judgment Day," the Code objected to Orlando's depiction of sweat on the Black astronaut's face in the final panel. Gaines reacted in fury, and the Code backed off, but Gaines was done.

Gaines tried publishing some illustrated fiction titles in a new format he called picto-fiction, for which Orlando also did some fine work, but they failed, and so he was left with *Mad* as his only remaining title.

Orlando returned to *Mad* in 1957 and stayed through the mid-1960s. One of the features he made his own was "Scenes We'd Like to See." His lushly rendered wash stories for *Mad* highlighted Orlando's gift for humorous subjects.

For Marvel Comics, Orlando contributed to several early issues of *Daredevil*. (Wallace Wood followed him on the title.) Then Orlando went to Warren Publishing

and helped James Warren launch *Creepy*, *Blazing Combat*, and *Eerie* as an artist, story editor, and cover painter.

Orlando's work for Warren was as good as anything he'd done for EC. His work for *Blazing Combat* (including the infamous "Landscape!") was particularly impressive (*The Blazing Combat Collection*, Fantagraphics Books, 2018). When Wood got his own line of comics to package and edit, Orlando contributed pencils to an issue of *Dynamo*, a *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* spin-off title.

But the biggest factor in Orlando's post-EC career was his move to DC Comics, which would take him to the top of the comic book business. Working for DC helped Orlando forge a friendship with Carmine Infantino, who became DC's Editorial Director in the late 1960s. Infantino hired Orlando, along with Joe Kubert and Mike Sekowsky, as staff editors, which enabled Orlando to stop freelancing and earn a regular salary.

Orlando proved to be a creative and innovative editor with a shrewd eye for talent and a nurturing spirit. While he handled special projects for DC and eventually rose to become vice president, he also found time to do outside work, including covers and interior art for *Newsweek* and comics and illustrations for *The National Lampoon*. When Bill Gaines died in 1992, it seemed logical for Orlando to be given the job of Associate Publisher for *Mad*, which by then was owned by Time-Warner, DC's parent company.

"I'm sure Bill Gaines is rolling in his grave," Orlando noted wryly.

Orlando retired in 1996 but continued to work on cover ideas for *Mad* and miscellaneous projects. He died in 1998 and was inducted into the Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame in 2007.

JOHN SEVERIN (1921–2012, b. New Jersey) began his career by submitting cartoons to a newspaper for the homeless, *The Hobo News*, when he was 10. Severin went to high school with future fellow comics legends Al Feldstein, Will Elder, Al Jaffee, and Harvey Kurtzman. After a stint in the Army, Severin broke into the comics field via Simon and Kirby's studio. While there, Severin drew a lot of Western stories for Prize Comics, including co-creating (with an unknown writer) *American Eagle*, a Native American Indian feature.

Severin started drawing for EC comics in 1953, where he produced many Western and war stories, including for *Frontline Combat* and *Two-Fisted Tales* (eventually writing and editing the latter). Severin also contributed to the first issues of Kurtzman's *Mad*. After the collapse of EC, Severin went to work for Stan Lee at Atlas (later Marvel) Comics. During the 1960s and 1970s, Severin's work at Marvel included *The Hulk*, *Sgt. Fury*, *King Kull*, *The Punisher*, and *Conan*. Severin was also the signature artist for *Cracked* magazine, a *Mad* competitor. He drew Sgt. Rock for DC, stories for *Creepy*, *Eerie*, and *Blazing Combat* at Warren, and various Dell titles.

Severin was inducted into the Will Eisner Hall of Fame in 2003.

MARIE SEVERIN (August 21, 1929–August 29, 2018, b. East Rockaway, NY) worked as a colorist and color editor for EC Comics. She started about 1952, after being recommended by her brother, EC artist John Severin. Her distinctive use of color added a richness of narrative and emotional texture to the stories, transforming the appearance of EC Comics and providing an instantly recognizable "look."

When publisher Bill Gaines proclaimed her EC's "daughter of the regiment!" he was probably thinking of her role as *animatrice* of the EC Christmas parties, for which the office walls were festooned with Severin caricatures of the EC staff.

In the 1960s, Severin moved to Marvel Comics where she added penciling and inking to her professional repertoire, working on such features as *Dr. Strange*, *Sub-Mariner*, *The Hulk*, *Conan*, and *Kull the Conqueror*. She also drew for Marvel's *Mad*-style satirical publications, *Not Brand Echh* and *Crazy*.

Severin won the Shazam Award for Best Penciler (Humor Division) in 1974. She was inducted into The Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame in 2001.

ANGELO TORRES (b. 1932, Santurce, San Juan, Puerto Rico) brokered a friendship with Al Williamson and a skill set honed at the School of Visual Arts into work for EC Comics starting in 1954. He initially worked with Williamson on Williamson's assignments. His first solo assignment, "Eye For An Eye," was famously rejected "time and time again," as he described it, by the Comics Code Authority. It didn't see print until 1971. Before Torres

could garner any more work, Bill Gaines shut down EC's comic book operation to concentrate on publishing *Mad*.

Torres was a member of the "Fleagle Gang," along with Williamson, George Woodbridge, Nick Meglin, Roy Krenkel, and Frank Frazetta. In the 1960s, Torres was a prolific contributor to James Warren's black-and-white magazine-size comics, done in the spirit of EC — *Creepy*, *Eerie*, and *Blazing Combat*. He also contributed regularly to *Sick*, *a Mad* competitor.

Torres returned to EC from 1968 to 1980, placing at least one assignment a month in *Mad* at the height of its sales and cultural influence. A facility with caricature made Torres a go-to talent for film and television parodies. He worked with the magazine several times after his initial lengthy run.

Torres was a special guest of Comic-Con International: San Diego in 2012. He received that organization's Inkpot Award in 2000.

CARL WESSLER (1913–1989, b. Carroll O. Wessler, birthplace unknown) began his diverse career as an animator for the Fleischer Studios in the 1930s. His earliest confirmed comics credits are believed to be humor features for Rural Home Publishing and Lev Gleason comic books. In the 1950s, he became one of Stan Lee's core quintet of writer-editors at Marvel Comics, working primarily on crime and humor titles.

At EC Comics, Wessler turned out a large number of horror and fantasy stories for *Tales From the Crypt* and *The Vault of Horror*. After EC folded, Wessler remained with Marvel but also began a long career at Harvey Comics, working on their line of children's characters. He also freelanced at DC, Charlton, and Warren Comics. He closed his comics career in 1980 at age 67 with a science fiction tale for DC's *Mystery in Space*.

ALFONSO "AL" WILLIAMSON (1931–2010, b. New York City) attended Burne Hogarth's Cartoonists and Illustrators School. At EC Comics, he distinguished himself for his science fiction work. In the 1960s, he did outstanding work for Warren's *Creepy*, *Eerie*, and *Blazing Combat*, as well as a notable three-issue run on King's *Flash Gordon*. From 1967 to 1980, he and writer Archie Goodwin teamed up on the newspaper strip *Secret Agent Corrigan* (a.k.a. *Secret Agent X-9*). In the early 1980s, he drew comic book adaptations for *Star Wars*, *Blade Runner*, and other movies. He also drew the daily and Sunday *Star Wars* newspaper strip, scripted by Goodwin, from 1981 to 1984. After a brief stint inking at DC, he began inking for Marvel, finally retiring in 2002 when his health began to decline. He was married twice and had three children. He won a National Cartoonists Society Award for his King *Flash Gordon* work and numerous Alley, Eisner, and Harvey awards. He was inducted into the Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame in 2000.

WALLACE ("WALLY"/"WOODY") ALLAN WOOD (1927–1981, b. Menahga, Minnesota) is universally renowned for his science fiction stories for EC Comics, for his significant contributions to the formative years of *Mad*, and for his "Panels That Always Work," a highly prized, concentrated primer for cartoonists. He created the spy strip *Cannon*, the adventure series *Sally Forth*, the comic book series *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*, and made significant creative contributions to *Daredevil*, *Mars Attacks*, and *Power Girl*. A veteran of World War II, he began work in 1948 as a letterer and assistant to Will Eisner. Wood's art graced not only comic books and comic strips, but record album covers, trading cards, posters, ads, TV, and much more.

In 1966 Wood began publishing *witzend*, a landmark "zine" that published comics created and owned by the medium's top talents and hip, young newcomers alike. With the fifth issue, Wood handed over stewardship of the magazine to Bill Pearson. Wood's personal affairs were troubled — he was a chain-smoker, an alcoholic, and he was divorced twice. In 1981 after multiple strokes and daunted by the prospect of dialysis for the rest of his days, he ended his life with a handgun.

Despite his tragedy, Wood is one of the most accomplished talents in the history of comics. He was the recipient of the National Cartoonists Society's Best Comic Book award in 1957, 1959, and 1965. He garnered two Alley Awards, a Best Foreign Cartoonist Award (Angoulême International Comics Festival, 1978), multiple Hugo Award nominations, and has been inducted into the Jack Kirby Hall of Fame, the Inkwell Hall of Fame, and the Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame.

Janice Lee, Arthur Lortie, Bill Mason, S.C. Ringgenberg, Greg Sadowski, and Tom Spurgeon contributed to these profiles.

THE FANTAGRAPHICS EC ARTISTS' LIBRARY

EC Comics revolutionized American comics with their provocative, literate, and visually stunning horror, crime, war, and science fiction anthologies. *The Fantagraphics EC Artists' Library* collects these stories, organized to showcase the work of each individual artist. Digitally restored and printed on archival paper, these editions include contextual essays and story notes by notable comics historians.

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